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THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF  
PENTECOSTALISM IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL,  
WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO  
WORKING CLASS WOMEN IN RECIFE.

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Submitted in part fulfilment for the  
degree of Ph.D. in History at the  
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#### SUMMARY

This thesis discusses the historical development of Pentecostalism in Northeastern Brazil in the twentieth century. In particular, it stresses the contributions of women in the establishment of the movement in Belém in 1911, its subsequent founding in Recife, and its continuing rapid expansion into the Northeastern backlands over the past eighty years. The current state of the Northeastern church and the role of women within the institution is discussed in light of both social and cultural factors interacting with this 'new religion'.

The study commences by establishing the historical and cultural background of Recife and the Northeast, with a view to understanding the social context of the lives of the working class. An historical examination of the early attempts to establish Protestant religion in the Northeast follows, in chapter two. Chapter three details the entry of Pentecostalism into the Brazilian Northeast. This historical survey provides the context for the subsequent chapters of the thesis. Chapter four focuses specifically on the history of the Recife church. Chapter five examines the unique historical contributions by which women have helped to mould the modern Brazilian Pentecostal church. It is argued that the dynamic female presence in the movement was central to its success in establishing a credible religious alternative to Catholicism and other Protestant denominations. Chapter six is a discussion on the life of working-class women within the Pentecostal community, detailing those factors relating to conversion and approved lifestyle within the church. Chapter seven seeks to demonstrate how Pentecostalism has elevated the social position of working-class women through education. A discussion on the adaptation of popular literature as a mechanism for socializing women toward specific moralistic norms is included. Finally this study contrasts the tenets of Pentecostalism with Northeastern working-class culture, in an attempt to analyse the means by which Pentecostalism is a catalyst both for individual and societal change.

In the absence of a comprehensive work on the history of Pentecostal women in Brazil, the method adopted here was to conduct a micro-study using participant-observation techniques at the grass-roots level, as each Pentecostal congregation is autonomous. Thus, although Pentecostals share certain basic beliefs, each congregation has its own distinctive approach to the problems of its local constituency. It is argued that the great strength of Pentecostalism lies precisely in this autonomy and the flexibility which this allows. The thesis aims to bring together both oral and written sources in order to reflect the varying perspectives of each individual and thus to represent a 'living' history.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. The Research Question: Women and Religion

'There are two things of which our country has more than any other nation on earth: saints and pregnant women!' Such was the saying I repeatedly heard in the Brazilian states of Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba. It is this Northeastern preoccupation with the belief that the institutions of religion and the family are both sacred and enduring that forms a background for the subject of this research endeavour.

If one is to understand the makeup of group identity within the larger sphere of a nation, it is necessary to understand people, not just a political or economic system. Since nothing touches humankind so deeply as beliefs about the sacred and matters of value, purpose and destiny, what could be more needful in a present-day evaluation of Northeastern Brazil, than to examine the metamorphosis of its religious life?

Further, it is significant to combine a study on religion together with an inquiry into its influence and effect upon women. Since it is only through a female that a family can be biologically produced, and since in Latin America more so than in many other areas of the globe a woman represents the image of a nurturing parent who socializes the young, it is logical to presume that through monitoring the female response to religious belief and experience, it may be possible to observe how various social dimensions of life in the Northeast have solidified or been modified over time.

### 1. Church Historians and Latin America

Traditionally, church historians have utilized mainly institutionalized sources in their analysis of religious movements. That is, researchers have examined the writings of prominent leaders of the group under review in order to probe for unusual philosophical and organizational constructs, studied baptismal or membership records seeking a variety of statistical correlations, or scrutinized the voluminous documents of church councils so as to summarize the relative social significance of religious interventions throughout history. Since institutional sources were often used to investigate the institution itself, much work devoted to the investigation of church history has produced somewhat one-dimensional commentaries on the role of religion in society.

However, recent research models have offset some of the biases of earlier studies in religion. Following the American and Western European cultural revolution of the 1960s, social scientists increasingly have devoted their attention to documenting and analysing popular music, popular art and popular religion as hallmarks of history and culture. Therefore, while many writers have in the past viewed the essence of Latin American religious history as little more than the policy-making and public actions of top-level administrators within the Roman Catholic church, scholars are today interested in chronicling such things as religious dissent, fanaticism and marginality.

Currently, a popular movement in Brazilian Catholicism known as 'Liberation Theology' is under academic scrutiny. Numerous books and

a plethora of journal articles have discussed the significance of Catholicism's attempt to move from what can be described as an isolated 'ivory-tower' existence where radical theologians merely write about social change, but do nothing, to a renewed relationship between priests and parish where actual physical and economic identification with parishioners in the realidade of their existence--be it on rural fazendas or in the streets and hovels of urban favelas--is seen as of greater importance than any other single demonstration of spirituality, including the mass.<sup>1</sup>

While recent research on Brazilian Church history has concentrated heavily on Catholicism, writers have also discussed Spiritism as a popular religious movement. Spiritism is represented in Brazil in two forms. Of primary importance--especially in the Northeast, with its history as a slave society--is the so-called 'lower [ie. common or popular] Spiritism' of Afro-Brazilian cults. Commonly called Umbanda, this form of Spiritism has several regional variants. Research and writing about the religion of Umbanda has mushroomed with the renewed interest in examining oral history, art-as-history, and African influence in the Americas.<sup>2</sup> A second form of Spiritism--one with fewer adherents nation-wide than Umbanda, but possessing a significant minority none the less--is the more philosophical, European-linked 'higher Spiritism' of Kardecism.<sup>3</sup>

## 2. Pentecostalism as a Brazilian trend

In spite of the increasing numbers of studies being produced which analyse popular religious movements within the ranks of Catholicism and Spiritism, church historians have not yet adequately



described and documented Pentecostalism as a Brazilian socio-religious trend. Pentecostalism is a popular religious movement noted for its emphasis on personal faith, the literal interpretation of the Bible, rigid moral purity, and aggressive evangelism. This strain of Protestantism is defined by its involvement of individuals in supernatural spiritual experiences such as miraculous healings and glossolalia (speaking in unknown languages while in an ecstatic emotional state.)

Numerically, Pentecostalism is not only the largest Protestant religious group in Brazil but in all of Latin America. This fact alone makes it and its historical development a subject worthy of careful study and analysis. Furthermore, it may be argued that since the majority of Pentecostal adherents come from working-class backgrounds, this popular evangelical movement must be considered as one of the major forces currently shaping the social consciousness of a significant sector of twentieth-century Brazilian society. Considering that one-seventh of all people who have ever lived on earth will be alive during the last ten years of this millenium, and that Brazil is the world's sixth most populous nation, then the influence of a religious movement of this magnitude must not continue to be overlooked.

Until now, data on Brazilian Pentecostalism has been scarce. While some authors have included a chapter on Pentecostalism in a compendium or edited work on Latin America, few monographs exist which examine the Brazilian nation and the Pentecostal denomination together, in detail.<sup>4</sup>

### 3. Women as a Subject of Study in Church History

If reluctance to investigate popular religious movements has typified much of ecclesiastical scholarship up to the present era, so too has reluctance to undertake a serious study of the role of women in the church. While Catholic scholars have acknowledged those historic contributions to the church made by great Abbesses or high-born nuns who had exceptional literary gifts, a published history of women in the Latin American Catholic church does not exist. Considering the role played by convents and female clerics in establishing and maintaining educational institutions and in administering charitable works, this is a serious omission.

Protestant women have also been generally ignored or rejected as subjects of church historians studying Latin America. Perhaps this oversight is simply due to the fact that the emergence of Protestantism as a viable religious movement has occurred only really within the last century. Another consideration rests on the fact that historically, the majority of outstanding female Protestant leaders in the New World have been based in the northern not the southern hemisphere. To date, it would appear that there is not even one academic work that solely addresses the issue of female contributions to Pentecostalism in Brazil.

The means by which Catholic and Protestant women have been overlooked in the ecclesiastical history of the New World varies not so much along the doctrinal and polity lines of their respective denominations, but rather, in accordance with the social, cultural, and political expediencies of the day. Exclusion of Catholic women

from a prominent place in the history of the Americas can be interpreted as a result of cultural and political maneuvering on the part of clerics who wished to solidify the institution of the church in a new and untried land. Catholic sisters who sought public prominence for their words or actions in the colonial era enjoined a battle on several fronts. Cultural machismo and the ingrained notion that humility is an important female virtue has often stifled personal female expression in Latin societies. However, the most significant and stringent opponent to the efforts of nuns to develop an academic tradition and thus make noteworthy contributions to theology and literature was the hierarchy of the Church, itself. Through the latent effects of historic councils, Catholicism proved to be the greatest inhibitor of those females who had pledged life-long service to a spiritual vocation.

Prior to the mid-sixteenth century in Europe, nuns were active in religious service to the community as teachers and orphanage administrators. However, the decisions enacted in 1563 at the Council of Trent radically stifled the participation of nuns in public life. In Council proceedings, male heads of the church legislated that members of female religious orders would henceforth be required to live in cloisters. In this way, women's activities in the outside community were easily regulated. Female influence and personal power was carefully curtailed by male bishops (literally 'overseers'). Since most New World nunneries came into being after the Council of Trent, they were subject to its rigid controls. True, some Latin

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American nuns did make notable humanitarian and theological contributions to the life of the church. However, even such notable women as Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, of Mexico (1648-1695) and Sor Catalina de Jesús Herrera, of Guayaquil, Ecuador (1717-1795), normally did not receive public commendation from their male superiors. Traditionally, nuns' contributions to the work of New World Catholicism have garnered little more than token acknowledgement in the written records of their church.

Protestant women did not become prominent in the social history of Latin America until the growth of non-Iberian immigration in the nineteenth century. These women found their roles were confined almost exclusively within the parameters of being wives and mothers. The Biblical admonition 'wives be subject to your husbands' (Ephesians 5.22) was understood by Protestants to be an important and literal command of Christ. Consequently, devout Protestants seldom permitted the exercise of a strong female influence anywhere other than in the home.

Until the 1970s, there was a scarcity of original resource material for historical inquiry on women in religion in Latin America. Not uncommonly, documents written by or for women often languished in the corners of private archival collections.<sup>5</sup> Previously, the most comprehensive sources for monitoring female viewpoints on faith and religion existed in monographs or letters penned by males, or in letters or personal diaries of those women who were literate. In the present day, however, with the advent of major universities recognizing women's history as a separate and bonafide field of study

in the social sciences, researchers have begun to re-examine diaries, personal spiritual journals, volumes of poetry and correspondence, as well as music and art produced by women as a means of discovering more detailed information about popular religious movements in history. While traditional reference sources which are produced and controlled by ecclesiastical institutions (statistics, internal self-evaluations) are still employed in academic research in church history, they are no longer considered as the sole or essential standard by which meaningful interpretations of historical events in the life of the church may be deduced. Rather, social history--the observation and commentary upon the lives of ordinary people as they reflect the human complexities of their era--has gained the interest and attention of the academic world.

This thesis, therefore, is an attempt to focus upon two subjects which traditionally have been confined to the periphery of historical research: non-conformist religion and the social history of women. Key research questions are these: What has prompted women to convert to a Pentecostal faith? How successful have women been in effecting the conversions of their family members? What leadership influences do women exert within the religious sphere? Utilizing information and informants from Pentecostal churches in and around the city of Recife, Pernambuco, it is hoped that this research, applied in its historical context, can formulate an overall social profile of working-class Pentecostal women in the urban Northeast during this century.

B. The Setting: The Northeast, with specific reference to Recife

Recife, Pernambuco is a good location for undertaking a study in social and religious history, since of all major Brazilian cities, Recife is, arguably, the one which has undergone the greatest social metamorphosis during its five centuries of existence. The city was for many years home to the most heterogeneous population on the American continent. Peoples of the most diverse origins, creeds and cultures all mingled in Recife to create a uniquely Brazilian type. Recife is the site of the first European-styled political assembly in the Americas, and the first centre of Jewish culture on the continent. Its religious and cultural roots are interwoven in the tapestry of its colonial heritage: Portuguese Catholicism, Dutch Protestantism, and West-African Spiritism.

Although Recife is an urban centre that possesses the characteristics of the modern and industrialized city, it still maintains links to its colonial past. The port of Recife has been established for over four-hundred years, and its political influence stretches back to the days when nearby Olinda was Brazil's first national capital. In Recife, social evolution has occurred, but not at the sometimes startlingly rapid rate that has been the case in the southeastern state capitals. In the Northeast, traditional attitudes still prevail. Ideas about gender roles and religious conduct have been slower to change than in the more liberal Southeast. Changes related to the Church and to women are seen with greater clarity against the backdrop of the Northeast, since here, tradition and newness co-exist but not co-mingle.

1. Political, socio-economic and demographic change in Recife

Today, Recife has an area population of 2.5 million. It is both the capital of the state of Pernambuco and the leading seaport of the Northeast, as well as the fourth largest city in the nation. But Recife was not always large or prominent. The city was founded in 1535 as the port for Olinda, the first permanent colony in the Portuguese captaincy of Pernambuco. After being sacked in 1595 by the British pirate James Lancaster, Recife remained a small village until Pernambuco was conquered by the Dutch in 1630. The Dutch made Recife their capital. Through their efforts, it was transformed into one of the most modern cities in the western hemisphere. Count Maurice of Nassau renamed the city 'Mauritzstad'. Here he built the first astronomical observatory in the Americas, as well as the first zoo. Here painter Franz Post, scientists Piso and Marcgraf, and scholars such as Friar Manuel do Salvador and the rabbi Aboab da Fonseca flourished under Dutch patronage. Recife continued to serve as the capital of Pernambuco after the Portuguese reconquered the city in 1654.

Under Portuguese rule, sugar plantations dominated the Northeast for over two-hundred years. During this time, Recife, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro were the dominant cities of the nation, providing import and export markets for the rest of the country. Entering through the ports of Salvador and Recife, African slaves were deployed to work the sugar plantations. For more than sixty years, Pernambuco was the seat of the quilombo, or slave republic of Palmares, founded

by escaped Afro-Brazilian slaves in 1630. Only at the end of the century were the Portuguese able to destroy this settlement.

In the eighteenth century, Recife enjoyed powerful regional status. Due to the difficulties of communicating with Salvador and Rio, the governor of Pernambuco was granted virtual autonomy in administering Portuguese interests in the northern plantation captaincies, and was subject only to direct control from Lisbon. In the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the merchants and shippers of Recife experienced unparalleled prosperity. The opening of the port to legal trade with nations other than Portugal after 1808 reinforced an already high European demand for Pernambucan sugar, cotton and hides. This period of economic advancement was followed by a flood of internal migration to Recife. The population of the northeastern interior converged upon the city.<sup>6</sup>

That Recife exerted strong political, economic and cultural influence as a regional centre far-removed and distinct from the cities of the South was never more apparent than during the republican revolts of the nineteenth century. On three distinct occasions, the Northeast attempted to separate from the rest of Brazil. After the failure of the first of these revolts in 1817, Pernambuco lost the captaincies of Alagoas, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte, and Ceará. In 1824, just two years after Pernambuco became a province of the Brazilian Empire, Pernambuco republicans were joined by other provinces of the Northeast and proclaimed the Republic of the Equator. Both the uprisings of 1817 and 1824 took place in Recife. A third



revolt, begun in 1848, ended when revolutionaries failed in their efforts to take Recife by storm.

Even after its failure to spearhead a movement for independence in the 1800s, Recife maintained its position as the key administrative centre and shipping port of the Northeast. Throughout the nineteenth century, the population of Recife continued to grow, both through internal and overseas migration. Elite academics, entrepreneurs and politicians were attracted to the growing metropolitan area. Since 1827 until the present time, most of the political leaders of northeastern Brazil have been trained at the Recife law school. In addition, the oldest continually publishing newspaper in South America is the Diário de Pernambuco, which was inaugurated in Recife in 1825.

Although Recife has maintained its regional economic dominance until the present day, it was in the nineteenth century that Recife reached the apex of its national economic prominence. Having dominated the economy of colonial Brazil through exports of dyewood, sugar and cotton, Recife's status relative to the Southeast began to decline with the eighteenth-century gold boom in Minas Gerais and the rise of coffee as a chief export crop in the late nineteenth century. During the latter period, sugar and cotton exports stagnated while those of coffee expanded rapidly. Migrants from Europe, attracted by the promise of work on the coffee plantations of the Southeast, no longer made Recife their point of entry into Brazil, but went on to Rio or São Paulo instead.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, limited industrial

development was introduced to Recife, but it was linked only to the processing of the agricultural and forest resources of the Northeast. The Americas' first modern cotton mills were established in Recife, Natal, and São Luis. In Pernambuco, factory-scale cigarette-making began in 1872, vegetable oil processing in 1890, tanning in 1891 and production of conserves in 1897.<sup>7</sup> However, at the same time as this was taking place in Recife, major industrial diversification was being developed in Rio and São Paulo. Similar benefits did not accrue to the Northeast and the balance of economic and industrial growth shifted to the Southeast and has continued to do so.

Recife slowly but increasingly became isolated from the economic and educational innovations of the Southeast. After 1870, short-range migration to Recife continued, but long-range migration did not. In fact a period of out-migration began, a 'brain-drain' from the Northeast. Industrialization had developed the south into a new land of opportunity. By 1889, the Northeast had become Brazil's region of perennial poverty. This poverty was not only monetary, it was intellectual. Elite out-migration characterized the regional shift away from the Northeast in the late 1800s.<sup>8</sup> While Rio and São Paulo surged forward into the twentieth century, Recife was trapped in the backwater of a technological lag and the ill-effects of a non-diversified economy.

One area where Recife maintained its stature as a leading Brazilian city even after the Federal government shifted its economic priorities southward was in its dominance as the key transportation

link for nearly one-half of the land mass of the country. Through the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Recife increasingly became the hub of considerable communication and transportation networks, as developing railroad and highway systems fanned out from Pernambuco across the states of Alagoas, Paraíba, Rio Grande do Norte and Ceará. Recife also retained its status as a major port-of-call for commercial shipping and ocean liners alike, and in the decade of the 1930s, the city further enhanced its international profile as one of only three stops on the route of regular Zeppelin service between Berlin and Rio de Janeiro.<sup>9</sup>

In spite of the relative prosperity of the city due to its role as a regional power, the economy of Recife continues to struggle in the present era. It has never regained the same level of economic dominance exhibited in its colonial heyday, although the shipping industry has continued to profit the port.<sup>10</sup> In general, the Recife economy is generally depressed. While in Brazil as a whole industrial employment grew between 1960 and 1980, this growth in the industrial labour force came largely at the expense of agriculture, not services. That means that in the agricultural-intensive Northeast, fewer people are working as farm labourers, as they are lured to higher-paying jobs in industry. At the same time, comparable or even greater numbers of individuals are selling hand-made crafts, home-grown foodstuffs, or their own bodies for prostitution on the streets of all major Northeastern cities. In Pernambuco, informal sector employment accounts for over one-half of the total labour

force. In Paraíba and Ceará, almost three-quarters of the work force is outside the labour market economy.

TABLE 1: PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF LABOUR FORCE BY  
ECONOMIC SECTORS IN BRAZIL: 1960 & 1978

	1960	1978
Agriculture	52	41
Industry	15	22
Services	33	37

Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Development Report (Washington, 1980)

TABLE 2: SELECTED BRAZILIAN STATES, LABOUR FORCE OUTSIDE  
THE LABOUR MARKET AND THE MARKET ECONOMY: 1970

States	Percentage of the economically active population
Brazil (average)	48.3
Federal District	14.5
São Paulo	29.7
Rio de Janeiro	30.8
Rio Grande do Sul	45.7
Pernambuco	56.0
Paraíba	73.3
Ceará	73.4

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística,  
Censo Demográfico. 1970

As might be expected on the basis of its employment patterns, the Northeast is typified by extreme inequality in distribution of income. In comparing income distribution among Brazil, Mexico, Argentina and Chile, the four largest Latin American countries, Brazil registers the

greatest disparity between the percentage share of total income received by the poorest twenty percent of the population and the wealthiest twenty percent of the population.

TABLE 3: INCOME DISTRIBUTION: PERCENTAGE SHARE OF  
HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY PERCENTILE GROUPS OF  
HOUSEHOLDS

Country	Lowest 20%	Highest 20%	Disparity
Argentina	4.4	50.3	45.9
Chile	4.4	51.4	47.0
Mexico	2.9	57.7	54.8
Brazil	2.0	66.3	64.3

Source: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, World Development Report (Washington, 1980)

Furthermore, in comparison to the other eight largest metropolitan regions in Brazil, Recife is the area with the greatest inequality of income. Historically, the top one to two percent of the Recife labour force has, on occasion, earned ten times more than fully two-thirds of the total labour force.<sup>11</sup> Housing is just one facet of the socio-economic indicator example which forcefully demonstrates the economic condition to which the working class must adapt. In Recife, the ultra-wealthy and the impoverished and destitute not only share the same metropolitan region, they may frequently share the same city block. In some neighbourhoods, such as in exclusive Boa Viagem, the huts and hovels of the poor lean precariously in the shadow of high-rise apartment blocks built by and

for the rich. Such contrasts are a graphic visual reminder of the tremendous economic disparity of the peoples who comprise this city.

## 2. Landholding and Cityward migration to Recife

In light of the chronic poverty of most residents of Recife, it seems unlikely that inhabitants of the interior of Pernambuco would flock to the coastal port city expecting to find a better standard of living. Yet, migrants continue to come to Recife by the hundreds and thousands. Between 1950 and 1970, the population of the Recife Metropolitan Region tripled. Migrants accounted for forty-seven percent of this growth.<sup>12</sup> That scores of people have fled the Northeastern sertão during recent years is an indication that the social and fiscal upheaval being encountered by rural residents of the region supersedes even those tensions of living in urban Recife.

One of the major struggles of Pernambucan peasants--the overwhelming majority of whom are farmers--relates to Brazil's policy of land ownership and land management. Most farmers in the Brazilian Northeast own no land at all. Fully forty-eight percent of the arable land is owned by only two percent of the rural population.<sup>13</sup> This means that on average during the last thirty years, more than four million Northeasterners have been forced to work someone else's land on a sharecrop, rental, or wage-labour basis. Though slavery was officially abolished in 1888, Josué de Castro's bitter indictment remains: indentured workers were never really emancipated, they were merely freed from the name of 'slave'.<sup>14</sup> The legacy of slavery remains intact, as long as the Brazilian latifundian system of great landholdings prevails.

TABLE 4: LANDHOLDING IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL: 1972

Size of Property (ha)*	No. of Properties	Area (ha)
1-10	363,776	1,573,149
10-50	362,785	8,632,177
50-100	115,859	7,961,478
100-500	129,319	26,042,086
500+	27,209	41,821,384

Source: INCRA Estatísticas Cadastrais, no. 1. 1972

\* One hectare is equal to 2.471 acres.

The staggering contrast of inequity of land distribution is evidenced by the fact that there are fifteen latifúndios in the Northeast of more than one-hundred thousand hectares. Together, these fifteen estates control more land than the joint territory of the region's 364,000 smallest properties. Fewer than 30,000 farms occupy over forty-one million hectares of land, but 700,000 farms occupy only ten million hectares.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, while peasant farmers have laboured to maintain subsistence living on their small, intensively-worked plots, much of the land of large estates remains unworked or has been given over to cattle grazing. With this reality in mind, it is no wonder that when periodic droughts and famines occur, sertanejos have migrated to the city. Since agrarian reform remains a stagnant political issue at both federal and regional levels, the only way the rural poor have of demonstrating their fear, dissatisfaction and resentment toward the political non-action is to migrate to the cities. However, backlanders also possess other motivations for moving to the city. Sometimes, migrants are driven by destitution or

anger; other times by comradeship and irrepressible hopefulness. The city often becomes a last chance, a desperate attempt to survive, to find employment of any kind, to get government or social assistance, or to weather the worst circumstances of life with a larger extended family.

Unfortunately, though many migrants come to Recife with hopes of finding a better life, the reality is that the city has not enough jobs or housing to accommodate the influx of newcomers. Migration to the regional urban centre has meant little more than a transfer of poverty from the countryside to the city. Favelas ring the periphery of the ever-expanding metropolitan area. These shantytowns are usually the only places where incoming migrants can find a place to live.<sup>16</sup> Typical favela residences (mocambos) are mud-daubed structures with frames of saplings or sticks covered with straw or palm-leaf thatch. Mocambos are normally the best accommodation new migrants can hope for, provided they can gather or purchase the necessary materials and construct the hut themselves. Despite the difficulties of establishing and maintaining a home in the favela, backlanders continue to arrive in the city and settle in these squatter areas. Many migrants believe that although urban living has its difficulties, the city still possesses greater potential for a better life than does the sertão. A favelado often views his circumstances as a temporary condition. He believes he will economize sufficiently to eventually gain access to the legitimate social system of the city, with its housing, educational and employment benefits.



Status symbols of the colonial period are slowly being reversed in the present era. Nowadays, to own an apartment--even a small apartment--in the centre of the city is universally accepted as an indication of high financial and social standing. This view is in opposition to attitudes held in earlier times, when living on the land signified power and prestige. Furthermore, the twentieth century has witnessed the birth of an unusual urban ethos in Recife, as elsewhere in Brazil. In a system of relationship between city and suburb which reverses the North American pattern, inhabitants of Brazilian suburbia are much poorer than city-centre dwellers.

### 3. Recife: The Current Scene

Today, Recife is a minor industrial centre and also serves as the regional headquarters for the Church, the military and the economic development agencies concerned with the Northeast. The Federal University in Recife continues to grow in its stature as a leading academic institution, attracting students from all the northeastern states.

Yet, in spite of these positive expressions of growth, negative side-effects of a burgeoning population also exist in Recife. The harmful side effects of massive urban migration in Brazil has been termed an 'ecology of delinquency'. This 'delinquency' manifests itself in unemployment, housing shortages, pollution, over-burdened transportation systems, inadequate educational facilities, health problems, crime, and a chronic lack of funds to correct these problems.<sup>17</sup> The Pernambucan capital has many ear-marks of these effects of over-urbanization. Recife is a city of widespread and

severe underemployment, with a high infant mortality rate, overpopulation, hunger and disease. The complex social and economic problems which affect the Northeast region as a whole are reflected dramatically in the microcosm of its leading city. Of pauperism in Recife, a former state governor himself acknowledged that '250,000 people live on occasional odd jobs and petty thievery'.18

The population of Recife has grown to such an extent that city-maintained services can no longer adequately care for the needs of the people. Over half the metropolitan region has inadequate sewage disposal, and the city water system is poorer than even that of São Paulo, the largest city in the southern hemisphere. In Recife, forty-seven percent of houses lack running water, whereas in greater São Paulo, only forty-one percent.<sup>19</sup> These insanitary conditions have contributed to the fact that Recife has the highest infant mortality rate of any capital in Brazil, 222.4 per 1000 live births.<sup>20</sup>

In terms of its physical organization, the city of Recife is composed of three parts. The port is situated on a peninsula, the main commercial and business sector of the city is on an island, and the third and largest portion of the urban centre is an ever-widening arc on the mainland. The three sections are linked by a number of bridges. Streets are unpaved, or remain in disrepair. Small groupings of *mocambos* exist side-by-side with multi-storey residences in the richest neighbourhood of the city, Boa Viagem. Boa Viagem is the only area of Recife where tourists are likely to be seen, as it is here that the reef from which the city gets its name parallels a stretch of golden-sand beach. Recife is tropical and exotic, but its

beauty, if one can call it that, is much the same as what the French engineer Vauthier, on his first arrival in the city in 1840, called a kind of beauté du diable, awkward and unfinished.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. The Religious Setting

The dominant religious presence in the city of Recife is Roman Catholicism. Due to the historical importance of the city as a centre of commerce, trade and politics during Brazil's colonial period, the Recife Church has long enjoyed prominence on the national stage. The Archbishopric of Olinda and Recife is one of the oldest and most revered clerical seats in the nation. Recently-retired Archbishop Dom Hélder Câmara, an outspoken proponent for the rights of the poor, is himself a native Northeasterner. On several occasions in the past twenty years, the Archbishop was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

However, although Catholicism dominates much of the history of Pernambuco, Recife is also a good location for an in-depth examination of the role of Pentecostal religion in Brazil. The largest and therefore, arguably, the most representative Pentecostal denomination in the country was founded on the fringes of the Northeast.<sup>22</sup> From its inception as the 'Assembléias de Deus' in Belém in 1911, Pentecostalism spread rapidly across the North and Northeast. Indeed, within five years of the first conversions in Pará, a Brazilian evangelist from Belém was missionizing in the cities of Recife and Olinda. Less than a year later, a small congregation of Pentecostals was established in the downtown area of Recife.

The Pernambucan Church has never looked back. Slow but steady numerical increase typified its growth in the 1930s and 1940s. In the

1950s, after a series of evangelistic campaigns, Pentecostalism began to boom. By 1970, when the Assembleia de Deus celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of its founding in Recife, the denomination had over one hundred congregations in the city, and claimed an adult membership of approximately 24,000. The total Church community including adherents as well as members was numbered at 57,500, or slightly more than six percent of Recife's total population.<sup>23</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, the Church continues its accelerated growth. The new sanctuary of the Cruz Cabugá Igreja-matriz (mother church) seats over five thousand people, making it the largest Assembleia building in the nation. By far, Pentecostals are the largest group of Protestants in the city, representing 44.4 percent of the total Protestant population. The next largest group is the Baptists, who although having established their work in the city more than a generation earlier than the Pentecostals, can claim only 35.4 percent of Recife's Protestant following. Presbyterianism, a distant third, masters no more than 13.6 percent of the city's Protestant community.<sup>24</sup>

#### C. Research Methodology

This field study is based on information gathered through both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include: participant-observation studies in numerous church-related activities, both formal and informal interviews, personal correspondence, reviews of the handwritten manuscripts of pastoral reports prepared for regional Church superintendents, attendance and observation at national and local church business meetings, and an analysis of local church

membership records. Secondary research sources are denominational yearbooks, personal letters belonging to pastors or missionary-evangelists, and Church and local newspapers.

#### 1. Participant-Observation Studies

Through participant-observation studies it was possible to experience the emotional and personal demands which Brazilian Pentecostalism places upon its adherents. Every attempt was made to spend significant amounts of time in observing and relating to people, as well as in researching written and statistical documents. With this purpose in mind, I arranged to live with a Brazilian Pentecostal pastor and his family, in the lower-middle class bairro of Esplanheiro, rather than with Canadian ex-patriates or in residence at the Federal University of Recife. Building relationships with the people I most wanted to observe, accommodating to their lifestyle, listening to their conversations, complaints and jokes, and speaking only and always in Portuguese, enabled insights to be gained that could not otherwise have been achieved, if the research base had been established anywhere else than in the home of a Pentecostal leader.

My adoptive family had close links to both the church and the theological seminary of a small Pentecostal denomination, the Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil (MEPB). The family head, Pastor I., was the pastor of a small but growing church in the bairro of Campo Grande. He and his wife were recent graduates of the Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste (STPN), in Encruzilhada. At the time of my sojourn in Recife, both were employed at the seminary. Dona L. was the president's secretary, and Pastor I. was a classroom

instructor. The teenage boy in the family was enlisted in the army, fulfilling his compulsory military service. While boarding weekdays at a military quartel, he visited at home on weekends. The university-aged young woman in the home, R., was a Sunday School teacher and a youth leader in the large igreja-matriz of the MEPB, located in Casa Amarela, a sprawling working-class neighbourhood on the outskirts of the city.

In private matters of conduct pertaining to the family (household duties; curfews), I submitted to the authority of Pastor I. However, outside of a basic understanding that I would at all times dress and act modestly, few additional pressures were exerted upon me to comply with stringent behavioural rules. For example, there was never a demand that I participate in evangelistic efforts that were a compelling force in the lives of many Pentecostals. Since my host family did not own an automobile, the only option for travel was by public transport. Some Pentecostals feel that not a spare moment or movement of a believer is to be wasted. Travelling on the city bus is an opportune time for church members to sing, testify, and distribute literature to a captive audience. Though my family members sometimes joined in this evangelistic witness, they never forced me to do so. I was free to participate or to decline as I chose.

However, though the family never demanded that I conform to a code of conduct outside the home in the neutral public sphere, once inside a church building, it was immediately assumed that once again, Pastor I.'s authority--or that of any other church leader--superseded

any display of individual desire. It was common to be called upon to participate in a church meeting, usually without any advance warning. During the first Sunday service I attended at Cruz Cabugá, the five-thousand seat Igreja-matriz of the Assembléia de Deus in Pernambuco, the presiding pastor announced to the congregation that a special visitor was being given the honour of singing for them, following the next hymn! It was impossible to refuse to sing without publicly defying the authority of the pastor, so I sang.

My first meeting in the MOPB Igreja-matriz was equally as eventful. It was startling to be asked to end the meeting in prayer, and so, as an automatic response, the prayer was offered in English. The entire congregation assumed that the prayer had been a demonstration of the Pentecostal gift of tongues-speaking, and joined in a long session of loud praise after the prayer was concluded. The audience was awaiting a translation of the 'heavenly message', and was greatly disappointed when it was not forthcoming.

While efforts in participant-observation studies remove some objectivity from scientific enquiry, it was both an extension of my own commitment as a Pentecostal Christian, and a useful academic pursuit to share in the authentic spiritual life of the Recife evangelical Protestant community. In approaching the study with a willingness to become involved with people rather than remaining aloof or detached, doors of friendship and acceptance were opened, and many opportunities to conduct unrestricted research were gained. Barriers of mistrust between observer and subjects were not created unnecessarily.

Attendance at all different types of Church activities, including special festivals and business meetings, was also an important part of the research design. However, attendance was concentrated on those services where female church members were most likely to be involved in active participation and therefore could be observed most easily. These were the Círculo de Oração (Prayer Circle), Sunday School, Youth Meeting, and Sunday evening evangelistic services. By regularly attending the meetings of the Casa Amarela, Campo Grande and Cruz Cabugá congregations, and by attending Seminary chapel services, it was possible to monitor the day-to-day interactions between females in the Church and between women members and the leadership of their respective congregations. The majority of the informants for the study came from these four assemblies, however periodic visitations at five other congregations in different areas of the city were also incorporated into the research plan. (See Figure 1).

## 2. Interviews

A total of sixty-three formal interview sessions were undertaken, two-thirds of which were with females and one-third with males. The interview sample was selected in an attempt to mirror a true representation of the total Church membership in terms of age, gender, marital status and educational level. In each instance, a pre-determined format was utilized, to insure that certain basic questions were asked of everyone. Though the questions were worded to guide the discussion, many questions were open-ended, allowing some freedom to pursue items that were of special relevance to the interviewee. Examples of the interview questions are found in Appendix A.



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1. Identificar los nombres de los países de origen de los extranjeros que en

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In certain instances, women were interviewed alone, in a Sunday School room prior to or following the Círculo de Oração. However, on occasions when it seemed more advantageous to talk to several people in an extended family, groups of four or more people were interviewed simultaneously, in a home. This proved to be a particularly valuable information-gathering technique. The informality and interpersonal exchanges within the group promoted eager expression of a wide range of opinions on a given topic. The comment or criticism of one individual would spark a response in several other persons, who by arguing to defend their own viewpoint, or by telling a joke, revealed much about themselves. Discussions which ensued after a major disagreement were always interesting and often hilarious. Much useful information was gathered in this spontaneous fashion.

Among potential informants, Church officials (especially those in the two mother-churches) proved notoriously difficult to interview. Perhaps the pastors and their wives were suspicious of my motivation in wanting to write an academic study incorporating information about their church, felt personally threatened by the project, or were simply protective of their time and privacy. Though polite, most of the pastoral staff of the largest church, Cruz Cabugá, consistently rebuffed my efforts to arrange a specific time to meet. However, interviews were successfully completed with the head pastors of two of the other three congregations where I was in regular attendance.

In addition to speaking with these Brazilian clergymen and members of their congregations, numerous interviews were conducted with Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal (mainly Baptist) foreign

missionaries and evangelists who resided in the city. From these discussions, I gained a clearer idea of the variety of those influences which were currently active in the evangelical churches of Recife.

Further, knowing it would be useful and important to hear about a popular religious movement from a source outside its own doctrinal circles, I undertook to informally survey a variety of Catholic laypersons on their opinions regarding Pentecostalism as a new Protestant phenomena. Casual discussions were conducted with labourers, beggars, housewives, newsagents, traveling fishmongers, shopkeepers and a teacher, all who either lived or worked in my neighbourhood. Having compiled the data, attempts were made to deduce typical attitudes and perceptions of practising Catholics toward their Pentecostal counterparts. Numerous research leads were developed through these on-going informal discussions with newly-formed friends. On one occasion, a husband and wife who were ice-cream vendors assembled their entire family--including a married son who had travelled some distance in order to be present--at a small street barraca in Espinhaireiro, simply so that they each could add their contributions to the study. Interviewing Catholics about the role of Pentecostal Christianity in the Northeast was most helpful in evaluating how Evangelicalism as a whole and Pentecostalism in particular was perceived by the Recife community-at-large.

### 3. Correspondence, Reports and Business Meetings

Personal correspondence and private unpublished pastoral reports provided valuable background regarding the composition and growth of

Pentecostal churches in the Northeast. Attendance at local church business meetings (normally held in the church sanctuary after the morning Sunday School) offered a first-hand look at how lines of authority were developed and how discipline was administered in each congregation. In this setting, it was possible to observe the interaction between the laity and the clergy, and between men and women of the assembly.

By special permission of the regional Superintendent of the MEPB, I was allowed to sit as an observer in the denomination's quarterly executive business meeting. This assembly of twenty presbyters was conducted in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte. The executive sessions were conducted in a one-day marathon meeting, which lasted over twelve hours. Listening to the discussion of the varied agenda items proved to be a good source of information on the key social, theological and financial concerns that currently face the northeastern Church.

#### 4. Local Church Membership Records

Membership records of the igreja-matriz of the MEPB were examined with a view to comparing the growth of this congregation with that of the Assembléia de Deus igreja-matriz, Cruz Cabugá. However, data from the two mother-churches was often scant and not systematically maintained. Only during the last ten years does there appear to have been any determined effort to keep reliable records. More than once, Church officials kindly but firmly told me that 'a church rich in the [Holy] Spirit does not need to concern itself with fleshly, earthly matters'. Interpreted, this means that in the estimation of most Pentecostals, any church whose congregation was energetic and lively,

and whose building was full to capacity during services (as the congregations I visited generally were) did not need to have copious records of statistics!

The only observable exception in this casual view toward record-keeping was when a new contact--an actual or potential convert--responded to the chamada (call for salvation) at the end of a sermon in an evangelistic meeting. In these circumstances, spiritual enquirers were encouraged to come forward to the altar area of the church sanctuary, to meet with counsellors who would deal personally with the unique needs or questions of each individual. As persons came forward during the chamada, often even before a conversion prayer was offered, counsellors would quickly ascertain the names of their charges, and write them in a ledger kept on or in the communion table at the altar. Strict numerical counts related to success in evangelism appear to be very important to the Pentecostal hierarchy.

What existing records do show is that both the Assembléia de Deus and the Missão Pentecostal do Brasil are steadily increasing their ranks. By researching what Church activities coincided with sudden and significant gains in membership, it was possible to deduce that combined with a strong on-going commitment to friendship evangelism, it has been the impetus of evangelistic campaigns and spectacular or supernatural occurrences such as radical conversions and miraculous healings that have most often precipitated explosive church growth in the Recife Pentecostal community. In the case of the Casa Amarela Igreja-matriz, the entire founding congregation came from those converted during a 1974 evangelistic campaign conducted by a Canadian

missionary-evangelist, Donald Schellenburg. The present pastor of the church, Moises Oliveira, served as translator to the missionary during the initial preaching campaign.

In periods of explosive growth, it has been typical that Recife Pentecostal congregations experienced dramatic increases in attendance and membership. At times, church bodies even changed their focus of ministry after an influx of new converts. This growth pattern is clearly seen in those churches involved as research subjects. After an era of decline growth, one church opted to begin a special youth program, while another began a ministry directed towards neighbourhood children. Still another assembly put its extra manpower to use by sending teams of people into the nearby favela to do volunteer social work as a means of evangelism, teaching children and women to read using the Bible as a textbook. During periods of significant growth, several city churches sent teams of young people to smaller towns in the interior of Pernambuco, to conduct evangelism campaigns or to assist their daughter-churches there.

After these numerical surges forward, when congregations were struggling to enfold their new adherents, growth slowed, and numbers plateaued. Yet, once the Church was able to absorb its converts into the wider institutional organization of Pentecostalism, another city-wide campaign or special prayer emphasis was undertaken, and the cycle repeated itself. Many of the Pentecostal churches of Recife have grown in this upwardly-spiralling fashion.

#### 5. Regional and National Denominational Records

Although there has been a brief history of the Assembléias de Deus published in Portuguese in Brazil, scouring its pages for clues to female participation in the early years of the movement is like looking for a needle in a haystack. The female equation in the historical narrative has almost been lost. Only infrequently do references mention women, and then, most often through euphemisms such as 'the beloved sister' or 'the humble handmaiden of God'. The document renders clues to female participation in the history of the Brazilian Pentecostal movement, little more. It was necessary to write to denominational executives, place innumerable telephone calls to pastors, and repeatedly interview elderly Assembléia de Deus members and retired missionaries who were familiar with the early days of the movement, in order to identify, verify and annotate the activities of those women to whom the text of the official history of the movement alludes in passing, or mentions only on the periphery of its male-dominated story. Recovering and then reweaving the threads of women's contributions into the tapestry of the development of northeastern Pentecostalism is a large part of this work.

## ENDNOTES: INTRODUCTION

- 1 In both word and deed, the postconciliar Church has manifested a changing social orientation which entails open involvement in political issues on behalf of the poor. This stance, with its accompanying philosophy, literature and practise is commonly known as 'Liberation Theology'. Since the 1968 convening of the Council of Latin American Bishops (CELAM) in Medellin, Colombia, an important literature has evolved from efforts to understand this changing social and political attitude in Latin American Catholicism. Important contributors to this work are Chilean Gustavo Gutierrez, Argentinian José Miguez Bonino, Costa Rican Orlando Costas, Brazilian Leonardo Boff, and Belgian-born José Comblin, who has lived and worked in Latin America since 1958. Until 1972, Comblin was a professor in Recife, Brazil. See Gustavo Gutierrez, Liberation Theology (1970); José Miguez Bonino, Doing Theology in a Revolutionary Situation (1975); Orlando Costas, The Integrity of Mission (1979); José Comblin, The Meaning of Mission: Jesus, Christians, and the Wayfaring Church (1977).
- 2 The Northeastern regional variants of Umbanda include Xangô in Pernambuco, Nago in Maranhão and Candomblé in Bahia. Standard works examining Afro-Brazilian Spiritism are Roger Bastide, Les Religions Africaines au Brésil (1960), Cândido Proença Ferreira de Camargo, Kardecismo e Umbanda: Uma Interpretação Sociológica (1961). See also Diana Brown, 'Umbanda and Class Relations in Brazil' in Brazil: Anthropological Perspectives: Essays in Honour of Charles Wagley, edited by Maxine L. Margolis and William E. Carter (1979) and 'Religion as an Adaptive Institution: Umbanda in Brazil' in The Catholic Church and Religions in Latin America, edited by Thomas C. Bruneau (1984); Harmon A. Johnson, 'Umbanda: A modern Brazilian Religion' in Dynamic Religious Movements, edited by David Hesselgrave (1978); Seth and Ruth Leacock, Spirits of the Deep: A study of an Afro-Brazilian Cult (1972); Delcyr de Souza Lima, Analisando Crenças Espíritas e Umbandistas, second edition (1979).
- 3 Kardecism is named after Alain Kardec, a nineteenth-century French mystic and writer whose teachings emphasized the blending of science, philosophy and spiritist religion. Kardecism began in 1857 and became organized in 1884 as the Spiritist Federation of Brazil (Federação Espírita Brasileira, FEB). Chico Xavier was largely responsible for popularizing and adapting Kardec's teachings to the Brazilian environment. The FEB maintains over five thousand associations and a wide network of institutions across Brazil, including hospitals, pharmacies, clinics, schools, orphanages, and seniors' homes.
- 4 William Read's work stands as one notable exception. This American Presbyterian churchman has published numerous books on Latin America, among them New Patterns of Church Growth in Brazil (1965) and Brazil 1980: The Protestant Handbook (1973). Emilio Willems'



Followers of the New Faith (1967) is another classic work on Brazilian Pentecostalism. Others who have contributed to the literature are Wilson Endruveit (1975); Judith Hoffnagel (1978); and Walter J. Hollenweger (1972). Although Hollenweger's work, The Pentecostals, is a compendium, the discussion on Brazil is of sufficient length and depth that it could stand alone as a monograph on Brazilian Pentecostalism.

- 5 Indeed, Catalina de Jesus Herrera's work Secretos entre el Alma y Dios (Secrets between the Soul and God) remained unknown, on archival bottom shelves, until 1950. (Amunci3n Lavrin, 'Women and religion in Spanish America', unpublished seminar paper, 1983).
- 6 P. L. Eisenberg, The Sugar Industry in Pernambuco, 1840-1910 (Berkeley, 1974), p. 126.
- 7 Banco do Nordeste do Brasil (1962), pp. 10-15, in John P. Dickenson Brazil (Folkestone, 1978), p.186.
- 8 Since 1928, Recife had attracted students from all over the empire to study at one of the nation's two faculties of law (the other being located in S3o Paulo). From 1832 to 1890, nearly one-fourth of the students came to Recife from Bahia and Rio de Janeiro; one-fifth arrived from more distant provinces and from overseas. Recife, during these years, served as a national diffusion point for intellectual innovation. However, from the 1890s to the 1920s, almost ninety percent of the students came from Pernambuco or its four adjacent provinces. Many of those graduates, degrees in hand, permanently left the Northeast in search of professional or marital opportunities in the developing South. See Bainbridge Cowell, 'Cityward Migration in the Nineteenth Century: The Case of Recife, Brazil', Journal of Interamerican Studies and World Affairs, 17 (1) (1975), pp. 43-63 (pp. 50-52).
- 9 The other two were Rome and Dakar. The German airship company which maintained the service was Luftschiffbau Zeppelin.
- 10 In 1969, Brazil launched 105,000 tons of merchant shipping and in 1981, 549,000 tons. Brazil was one of four Latin American countries to double the size of its shipping fleet in the period 1969-78. (The other three countries to double the size of their shipping fleet were Cuba, Ecuador, and Venezuela.) The Brazilian fleet has progressively become larger, newer, and more specialized. John P. Dickenson, 'Communications and Transport', in The Cambridge Encyclopedia of Latin America and the Caribbean, (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 78-87 (pp.84-85).
- 11 While only 1.6 percent of the Recife labour force earned more than four-hundred U.S. dollars a month in 1970, fully sixty-five percent of the labour force received less than forty U.S. dollars per month. Judith Chambliss Hoffnagel, 'The Believers:

- Pentecostalism in a Brazilian City' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978), p.6.
- 12 Hoffnagel, Ibid.
  - 13 Josué de Castro, Death in the Northeast: Poverty and Revolution in the Northeast of Brazil (New York, 1969), p. 154.
  - 14 De Castro, p.9.
  - 15 Simon Mitchell, 'Introduction' in The Logic of Poverty: The Case of the Brazilian Northeast, edited by Simon Mitchell (London, 1981), p. 5.
  - 16 Even the origin of the word favela in itself illustrates the pattern of rural-urban migration typical of northeastern Brazil. The Morro da Favela in Rio de Janeiro was first settled by Northeasterners from the Canudos, Bahia area, who came from a village called Favela. See Elizabeth Lowe, The City in Brazilian Literature (London, 1982), p.39, note 29.
  - 17 Josephina Figueira-McDonough, 'A Transitional Model of the Ecology of Delinquency: The Case of Rio de Janeiro', Luso-Brazilian Review, 13 (1976), 138-56.
  - 18 General Cordeiro Faria, 11 Mensagem do Governo a Assembléia Legislativa de Pernambuco. Recife, 15 March 1956, Diário Oficial de Pernambuco (16 March 1956).
  - 19 Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, 1970, in Alan Gilbert, Cities, Poverty and Development: Urbanization in the Third World (Oxford, 1988), p. 81.
  - 20 Hoffnagel, p. 7.
  - 21 Gilberto Freyre, Um Engenheiro Francês no Brasil, second edition (Rio, 1960).
  - 22 The other main branch of Pentecostalism in Brazil today is the 'Congregação Cristã do Brasil'. It was founded and grew to prominence in São Paulo and the Southeast, under the leadership of Italian-American immigrant Luis Francescon.
  - 23 Hoffnagel, pp. 7, 32.
  - 24 Ibid, p. 32.

## II. PROTESTANT FORERUNNERS TO THE PENTECOSTAL MOVEMENT IN THE NORTHEAST

In Latin America as elsewhere, religion has often been used as a tool of empire. The doctrinal and territorial lines of present-day Christendom in the Americas basically follow those demarcations established by European powers of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, as they plotted their policies of economic and political expansion in the New World. When economic rivalries clashed, often so did competing religions. Brazil's repeated rejection of Protestantism stands as a clear case in point.

### A. Huguenots on Villegagnon Island

Earliest efforts in establishing Protestantism in Brazil began with the ill-fated attempt of Huguenots to introduce French Calvinism on Villegagnon Island in Guanabara Bay during the decade 1557-1568. Admiral Gaspar de Coligny, leader of the Huguenots, obtained patents from King Henry III for the founding of a colony in South America. The expedition of eighteen men and women sailed into what is now the harbour of Rio de Janeiro on March 7, 1557. Upon receiving word of Coligny's safe arrival, the Reformer John Calvin of Geneva sent him three-hundred settlers, two ministers, and fourteen ministerial students, to bolster the fledgling New World Protestant community.

The purpose of the Huguenots' move to South America was, initially, not to missionize, but to colonize. The French Protestants were looking for a place where they would be permitted peaceful settlement and religious liberty. It was the hope of the first Huguenot settlers that Fort Coligny would become a safe haven for

successive convoys of Huguenots fleeing persecution in Europe. The two ministers among the first colonists were Peter Richer and Guillaume Chartier. On March 10, 1557, Richer delivered the first sermon by a Protestant minister on Brazilian soil.

The Huguenot dream of an idyllic New World home was never realized. The ambitiously-named but short-lived 'Antarctic France' was soon split by religious differences. French Catholic brazilwood traders had been active on the island for nearly four decades before the Huguenots arrived. Numerous controversies soon arose between the Catholic and Protestant groups. Even Nicholas Durand de Villegagnon, the colony's military leader and an acknowledged brilliant battle tactician, was unable to resolve the doctrinal disputations of the two opposing religious factions.

The Jesuits were particularly bold in their condemnation of the Protestant 'invasion' of Villegagnon Island. Detailed lists of Protestant attacks on the pillars of Catholic theology were recorded by Jesuit historians. These fierce denunciations reveal the keen clerical competition which surfaced between Catholics and Calvinists during sixteenth century Brazil. The newly-arrived Protestant sect was most carefully observed and zealously condemned by its main opponent:

The French Huguenots...soon began vomiting their poison which they had carried hidden deep in their bosom: the doctrine of Calvinism. One of them, João Boles, a man learned in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and well versed in the Holy Scripture, has adulterated it in accordance with his false sect. He has been talking sinisterly of holy images, indulgences, papal bulls, and the Roman Church among the common people [of Rio]...in the first instance in private, then later in public. All this was mixed with humour...

Catholic opposition to the Protestant presence often turned to violence. After several brushes with death at the hands of Jesuit-instigated mobs, Jean Jacques le Balleur (the inflammatory Huguenot preacher 'João Boles' greatly disliked by the Jesuit hierarchy), was finally apprehended and hanged in 1567. Three other Huguenot ministers were also killed, but in less public fashion. Jean du Bourdel, Pierre Bourdon and Matthieu Verneuil were murdered by drowning, when they were hurled into the ocean off Villegagnon Island.<sup>2</sup>

Suffering from attacks by Indians, the ecological effects of the tropics, persecutions at the hands of Catholics, and debilitating internal dissension, the French Protestants were finally driven out by the Portuguese Catholics in 1568. Although the venture was short-lived, the fact that it was made serves to show that within a few years of Martin Luther's death, while Calvin was still alive and before Elizabeth had come to the throne of England, Protestantism was attempting to establish a beach-head in the New World.

#### B. The Missão Holandesa: Dutch Calvinists in Pernambuco

The next Protestant community seeking to gain a foothold on Brazilian soil were the Dutch. Their initial advance in the early seventeenth century was spearheaded along the Northeastern coastline. The settlements of Bahia (modern Salvador), Olinda and Recife were attacked and occupied by Dutch sailors between 1624 and 1630. This intermittent warfare between the New-World Dutch and Portuguese took on economic, social and religious overtones which mirrored the political turmoil of the European continent. The crowns of Spain and

Portugal had united in 1580. Thus, Portugal became a military ally of Spain, and was embroiled in the long struggle between Spain and the Netherlands. The 1620s saw the Dutch launch a full-scale offensive against the American territories of its Iberian foes, led by the Dutch West India Company (founded 1621). The political wranglings of Europe were played out in the economic bloodletting of the New World colonies.

In 1624 the Dutch seized Bahia. A fleet of fifty-two Spanish ships and twelve thousand men were required to recapture the city in 1625. The West India Company launched a second, and this time successful, assault on the Northeast, seizing Pernambuco (modern Recife) in 1630. With the capture of São Luis do Maranhão in 1641, the Dutch controlled seven of the fourteen captaincies which formed Portuguese America. The objectives of the Dutch move into Northeastern Brazil were to interrupt trade routes of the Spanish and Portuguese, and to undercut Portuguese interests in the growing sugar industry. Immediately upon establishing a firm military presence in the Northeast, the Dutch began providing ships and loans to sugar mill owners and acting as refiners and distributors of Brazilian sugar via Amsterdam.

Still, economic imperialism was not the only goal of the West India Company. The ongoing warfare between the Dutch and the Portuguese in the Northeast also took on highly-charged religious overtones, as the Dutch Calvinists opposed the Catholic Portuguese. Rev. João Baers of the Missão Holandesa first conducted services for Protestants on board a mission ship anchored in the port of Recife on

February 14, 1630. His inaugural sermon was a pointed parallel between Israel's struggle to defeat the enemies of God and the challenge the Dutch Protestants faced as they sought to overturn the influence of Roman Catholicism in the Northeast. Baers recounted the Biblical narrative of Exodus 17:8-14, where a small, poorly-equipped Jewish army soundly defeated the forces of the more powerful Amalekites, as Israel journeyed toward the promised land. Baers' analogy was clear: underdogs triumph over their foes and take possession of an earthly paradise when God is on their side!

1. 'Predikants' and Predators: Religious Fervour and Economic Exploitation

Dutch Reformed missionary-pastors soon arrived in Pernambuco. In 1636, the first Reformed synod in the Americas was organized in Recife. Minutes of the synod (1636-44) reveal that thirty-three ministers or predikants were dispatched to various areas of the Northeast, to help the sick and to catechize Indians. Though Dutch dominion along the Northeastern coastline stretched from Maranhão to Sergipe, Calvinist missionary efforts had only limited results. Even achieving a measure of improvement in public morality (a prominent concern of the synod) was doomed to failure in Recife, due to the rapid urbanization of this important seaport. The concentration of people favoured and even intensified problems such as prostitution and alcoholism.<sup>3</sup>

Though keen for the success of Protestant missionizing, the Dutch generally followed a policy of religious toleration in their early dealings with Nordestinos. However, while Franciscan and Benedictine

priests were left to go about their duties relatively undisturbed, this same demonstration of informal good will was never extended to the Jesuits. Almost without exception, the interaction between Jesuits and Protestants was acrimonious and often violent. The Society of Jesus was anathema to Protestants in general and to Calvinists in particular. The Dutch--as the French Huguenots before them--found the Jesuit order to be a constant and painful thorn in their side. Jesuit priests actively opposed the Protestant presence in the Northeast, and encouraged Indians of their aldeias to fight against the heretic invaders. In response, the Dutch deported every Jesuit they could apprehend. Catholic prejudice against the Protestant newcomers was solidified, and attitudes of bitter hatred against Catholics in the Dutch Reformed community were fueled. On-going vindictive retaliatory acts by both groups against each other served merely to heighten feelings of hostility and suspicion, actions which have sown seeds of mutual distrust between Northeastern Protestants and Catholics ever since.

During the era of Dutch rule, it was only on the rarest occasions that a confirmed Catholic renounced his denominational affiliation in favour of the new Protestant religion. One notable convert to the Dutch political and religious viewpoint was Padre Manuel de Moraes. Moraes' conversion was all the more remarkable because he belonged to the 'infamous order' of the Jesuits. A native-born Brazilian, Moraes was already an ordained priest in charge of a Pernambucan aldeia when the Dutch invaded the Northeast. For nearly four years he led his Indian followers against the Dutch, distinguishing himself in numerous



guerrilla skirmishes. Seemingly without reason or explanation, Moraes voluntarily surrendered to the Dutch at Paraiba in January 1635. He subsequently underwent a complete change of loyalties and lifestyle. Several witnesses testified that Moraes actively helped the Dutch against his compatriots. He associated freely with the Calvinists, attended their religious services, and even ate meat during Lent.<sup>4</sup>

Given Dutch sea power, financial strength, and technical and business expertise, the fall of Pernambuco to the Dutch West India Company in 1630 appeared to mark the inauguration of a new colonial empire. However, Dutch rule in Brazil was ultimately undermined by its role as a religious invader. After the 1637 slump in world sugar prices, economic conditions in Brazil began to deteriorate. Dutch and Jewish merchants in Recife profited from the demise of their religious opponents, lending money to Catholic millowners at exorbitant rates. Governor Johan Maurits' prohibition of interest rates higher than eighteen percent on loans illustrates how mercenary the tax-farming process among non-Catholics became. In contrast, the Santa Casa da Misericórdia, a Catholic Luso-Brazilian charitable institution, charged only seven and a quarter percent on its loans. The true degree of Protestant economic exploitation becomes fully apparent when it is considered that the Dutch and Jewish merchants who made loans to the sugar planters of the Northeast were themselves borrowing in Amsterdam at little more than three to four percent. With corruption endemic in the upper echelons of the Protestant government infrastructure, the majority Catholic population asserted itself. No longer were Dutch economic policies and Protestant theology merely

cultural irritants to the religious majority, as these viewpoints and actions were tangible proof of the destructive power of a foreign religious heresy. Any advantage the Missão Holandesa might have gained from extending toleration toward the majority of Brazilian Catholics was undermined by a prohibition on the replacement of priests, the culturally insensitive activities of the Calvinist predikants, and the exploitive fiscal policies of Dutch entrepreneurs.

In 1644, Portuguese Catholic planters in Pernambuco plotted an uprising against the Dutch. The initial plan miscarried, but a long and bitter struggle ensued, with rural-based Catholics turning to swift guerrilla activity against the urban-based Jews and Protestants. In the same year, a successful guerrilla campaign against the Dutch was waged in Maranhão, and the Protestants were driven from that region. Although the Dutch continued to hold power in the urban centres of the Northeast for nearly nine years after the first wave of protest, they increasingly lost control of the backlands. Eventually, facing war with England in Europe and beset by Catholic tenant farmers throughout Northeastern Brazil, the Dutch were forced to capitulate in 1654, after the cutting of their seaborne lines by a Portuguese squadron. The Dutch Protestants were expelled from Brazil and official recognition of the reconquest of Brazil was acknowledged by the Netherlands in 1661.

## 2. The Legacy of Early Protestant Endeavours

Though they were both short-lived, the efforts of early Protestant missions to Brazil are not without historical significance. Certain firsts for the Western Hemisphere were established at Rio and

Recife. Huguenots celebrated the first Protestant communion, drafted the first Calvinist confession of faith, and produced the first Protestant martyrs. The Dutch in Pernambuco organized the first Presbyterian synod, and offered religious tolerance for the first time. However, both groups were guilty of one fatal error, that being failure to assimilate into mainstream Brazilian culture. Consequently, it was unavoidable that Protestantism was rejected as the heretical religion of intruders. 'Protestantism' became a word associated with invaders and enemies of the nation.

#### C. Freedom of Religion guaranteed by Law

After the expulsion of the Dutch from the Northeast in 1654, the Portuguese colony was closed to non-Catholics for one-hundred and fifty years. During this time, Catholic priests had permission to board ships docked at major ports, and on their own authority could refuse entry into the country to anyone who was not of Catholic faith. It was only at the beginning of the nineteenth century that English supremacy over Portugal and the need for foreign immigrants forced the opening of Brazil to Protestantism once again.

An 1810 commercial treaty between England and Portugal re-introduced religious tolerance to Brazil. However, this treaty assured only limited freedom of religion, since it applied solely to foreigners living in Brazil, not to Brazilians themselves.<sup>5</sup> According to the treaty between Dom João VI and England, English property in Brazil was exempted from the control of the Roman Catholic Inquisition. Furthermore, Englishmen were allowed special cemeteries and guaranteed

the right to a Protestant funeral. Protestants were forbidden to proselytize, but they were permitted freedom of worship in private residences, and were given the privilege of engaging a resident chaplain. Accordingly, the first Anglican minister arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1816, and the first Anglican church in all Latin America was erected in the city, in 1819.

Although such concessions made to Protestants were vigorously opposed in some quarters, it was reported that the Roman Catholic bishop of Rio de Janeiro had not objected to the establishment of an Anglican house of worship in his Diocese saying 'the English have really no religion but...if you oppose them, they will persist, and make it an affair of infinite importance;...if you concede to their wishes, a chapel will be built, and nobody will ever go near it!'<sup>6</sup> The bishop's prediction was duly borne out, for although Anglican and Lutheran chapels were constructed in Rio and São Paulo soon after the treaty was formalized, the churches were small and growth in membership was limited. The congregations consisted almost entirely of the English-speaking merchant communities living in these cities.

In 1823, the Brazilian Constituent Assembly debated the extension of religious freedom to all its citizens. Interestingly, chief among those arguing for religious liberty was Monsignor Moniz Tavares, the representative from Pernambuco. On March 25, 1824, the Constitution became law. Its fifth article recognized Roman Catholicism as the state religion, but also proclaimed that 'all other religions will be permitted'. Protestant denominations wasted no time in taking full

advantage of the new ruling. Many European and North American mission boards began to consider Brazil as a new frontier for pioneer ministry.

TABLE 5: A CHRONOLOGY OF PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS  
ESTABLISHED IN BRAZIL, 1819-1922

Date of first public service	Denomination	Location of first established church	Founding Minister
1819	Anglican	Rio de Janeiro	Lord Strangford(a) Robert Crane(b)
1823	Lutheran	São Paulo Rio de Janeiro	various(c)
March 1836	Methodist	Rio de Janeiro	Justin Spaulding
10 May 1855	Congregational	Petropolis, RJ	Robert R. Kalley(d)
1860	Episcopal	Belém, Pará	Richard Holden(e)
12 Jan. 1862	Presbyterian	Rio de Janeiro	Ashbel Green Simonton; Alexander L. Blackford
15 Oct. 1882	Baptist	Salvador, Bahia	William Buck Bagby Zachary Clay Taylor
10 June 1895	Adventist	Brusque, SC	F. H. Westphal
20 Apr. 1910	Congregation of Christ(f)	São Paulo Santo Antonio da Platina, Paraná(g)	Luis Francescon
19 Nov. 1910	Assemblies of God	Belém, Pará	Gunnar Vingren Daniel Berg
1 Aug. 1922	Salvation Army	Unknown	David Miche

Source: Developed from records in Almeida, *História das Assembléias de Deus no Brasil*; Pereira, *História dos Batistas no Brasil 1882-1982*; Wedemarr, "History of Protestant Missions to Brazil 1850-1914".

- a) Lord Strangford had been holding informal but regular meetings in his home for nine years prior to 1819, when the construction of the church building was finally completed.
- b) Rev. Robert Crane was the first official British Chaplain to arrive in Rio de Janeiro, in 1816. He was able to build upon the work begun by Strangford.
- c) Five German Lutheran churches were planted amongst immigrants, between 1823 and 1829. Pastors came from Germany under sponsorship of either the Brazilian government or societies promoting immigration. With the rapid increase of Lutheran immigrants, lay preachers had to be elected from within smaller rural congregations, for discharging pastoral offices.
- d) Robert Kalley was a British medical doctor who came to Brazil after several years of missionary ministry in Madeira. A self-supporting missionary, he founded a Sunday School which later matured into a Congregational church.
- e) A Scot by birth, Holden was educated in the United States. His ministry in Brazil was characterized by controversy: he opposed other Protestant groups, and advocated celibacy and itinerancy for all 'true' missionaries. In less than two years, Holden had left Belem for Salvador, where he was again embroiled in controversy, this time as a result of public denunciations of the Bishop of Bahia. In spite of his radical views, Holden was a zealous worker. He was the translator of The Prayer Book into Portuguese. More traditional missionary efforts were undertaken by Lucien Kinsolving and Watson Morris, beginning in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, in 1890. Their efforts helped consolidate a national Episcopal Church.
- f) While most of the other denominations listed here have taken their names and much of their direction from foreign missions, the Congregação Cristã has not. Though founded by an Italian-American, the Congregação is an independent Pentecostal church.
- g) Francescon formed two churches at the start of his ministry. One was composed of former Roman Catholics, the other of former mainstream Protestants.

#### D. Bibles in the Vernacular: Opposition in Bahia and Pernambuco

Following the official establishment of religious liberty in Brazil, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist churchmen quickly responded to the opportunities in missionary evangelism afforded them by the new dictate. In contrast to their Anglican and Lutheran

predecessors, these groups had no intention of limiting their attention to an English minority. The younger missions now had a more ambitious target. They wanted to convert the masses. To do this, they sought to develop an evangelistic strategy which would bridge the language and culture gap that existed between Anglo-American missionaries and the Brazilian public.

As these youthful, apprentice missionaries travelled throughout Brazil, they discovered that the Scriptures were in very short supply. Methodist missionary Daniel Kidder testified that during the 1840s, he encountered a priest who had a twenty-three volume French Bible in his possession, but not a Portuguese translation. Kidder further recounts his astonishment at meeting a lawyer who had never seen a Bible. After his own inspection, the missionary was forced to admit that he could not find even one Bible among the library collection of the Law Academy in São Paulo.<sup>7</sup> Based on personal observations similar to Kidder's and in light of their own best judgment, increasing numbers of Protestant missionaries reasoned that large-scale Bible distributions reaching whole sectors of the Brazilian populace might be an effective means of gaining public good will while at the same time establishing a strong theological base for future evangelistic endeavours.

Daniel Kidder was among the first of the new Protestant missionaries who decided to make the circulation of Bibles and tracts his basic evangelistic method. Together with Justin Spaulding, Kidder attempted the first systematic distribution of scriptures in Brazil, from 1836-1842. Particular attention was given to providing schools

with Bibles. When Spaulding wrote to the American Bible Society in New York in 1838, requesting them to begin printing Portuguese Bibles for Brazil, the Society agreed to do so.

The British and Foreign Bible Society entered the scripture-selling fray in 1856, when its first agent arrived in Brazil. By 1878, four salesmen were kept busy coping with public demand for scripture portions. As a non-profit organization set up to translate, print, and distribute Bibles at cost or less than cost (when British philanthropy permitted), the Bible Society was able to undercut any price that Catholic competitors could offer for testaments or complete Bibles. The cost of a copy of the Protestant Scriptures was its most attractive feature. Considering that the price for a Roman Catholic Bible was 2 pounds and 10 shillings, 8 shillings for a Protestant Bible seemed a veritable bargain.

The missionary-salesmen of the British and Foreign Bible Society did a brisk trade, but also were targeted with severe public criticism. One disgruntled observer wrote to a Rio de Janeiro newspaper complaining that '...a great number of Bibles, printed in London...are being sold for a low price, not only in stores, but also by these book peddlers...and in it we found ideas, which...are certainly not what we have been taught in our Catholic catechism'. A Brazilian government official similarly complained about the English who 'believe they know so much about religion that they would teach all the world'.<sup>8</sup>

The distribution of Portuguese Protestant Bibles by the American and British Bible Societies brought constant and fierce opposition



from the Brazilian Catholic hierarchy. In 1839, the American Bible Society printings were denounced by the Archbishop of Bahia as 'mutilated and altered copies of the scripture'. When the first Roman Catholic editions of the scriptures were finally published in Brazil in 1845, the expression 'False Bible' was used by the Archbishop in reference to the Protestant edition, in an attempt to discredit it.

Later, the designation 'False Bible' was a term re-employed by Canon Joaquim Pinto de Camargo, in the highly-publicized 'Bible Debate' in Recife during the 1860s and 1870s. Opposing Pinto de Camargo was General José Inácio de Abreu e Lima. Though not a Protestant, Abreu e Lima distributed the Portuguese scriptures published by the Bible society. He was criticized and condemned by Canon Joaquim, who wrote articles in O Diário de Pernambuco expressing his displeasure at Abreu e Lima's activities. Abreu e Lima answered to the charge, in the Jornal do Recife. The written controversy ensued, with full public attention. Abreu e Lima's unauthorized public distribution of scriptures in the vernacular was deemed such a rebuff of ecclesiastical authority, that when he died at age seventy-five, he was denied burial in the public cemetery. Instead, his remains were buried in the English cemetery of Recife.

#### E. Education and Evangelism: Gaining the goodwill of the Elite

Such was the turbulent and occasionally violent atmosphere of Protestantism in the Northeast. After Methodism took the lead in gaining for the general populace greater accessibility to the Bible, Presbyterians and Baptists further developed Protestant interests through the construction and operation of schools.

Throughout the nation, colleges, seminaries and numerous evangelical secondary schools were founded.<sup>9</sup> In Recife, the Presbyterians founded a seminary, a secondary school, and a girls' school. The Baptists also established a seminary and founded the co-educational *Colégio Americano Batista*. Both denominations established primary schools in the premises of their local churches.

#### 1. Efforts to Promote Literacy

Why such a push toward education, when evangelism was the manifest task of the missionary? It seems apparent that Baptists and Presbyterians alike could foresee positive long-term results for missionizing, if only illiteracy could be overcome. Improving the educational climate of Brazil was helpful to Protestantism, simply because of education's potential to act as a mechanism for radical social change. By-products of formal education such as the expansion of social awareness and greater tolerance toward alternative world views were believed to promote a positive latent predisposition toward non-traditional religion, thus aiding Protestant efforts in evangelism. Furthermore, as suggested through personal observations detailed in the diaries of some nineteenth century missionaries to Brazil--and now supported by modern-day sociological testing--literate persons are more likely than illiterates to investigate philosophies which compete with that of the status quo.<sup>10</sup> Providing a catalyst whereby individuals would be challenged to investigate new ideas was an obvious benefit to the Protestant mission effort. Linking evangelistic strategies to literacy development programmes was both tactically shrewd and constructively humanitarian.

In strictly practical terms, it may have been that missionaries judged that advanced education was the only commodity they possessed which Brazilians substantially valued. In the highly illiterate Northeast, the missionary teacher could gain a modicum of power and respect, especially in the controlled environment of the *colégio*. From the Brazilian point of view, it might have been a fair trade-off, as well. A father might be submitting his children to the instruction of a foreign 'heretic', but at the same time, he would be exploiting the benefits of the Protestant system, enhancing the upward social mobility of his family.

The situation facing educators in late nineteenth century Brazil was a difficult one, at best. In 1882, two percent of the imperial budget was devoted to education, while twenty-one percent was expended on the military.<sup>11</sup> In 1890, Brazil's illiteracy rate was seventy-nine percent, and only 18 per 1,000 were in schools. This meant that only 300,000 students were being educated in 7,500 schools nation-wide.<sup>12</sup> Of the regions surveyed in 1906, the northeastern states of Bahia and Pernambuco ranked lowest. (See Table 6).

It can be argued that Protestant missionaries held the line in the battle for literacy through the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century. The number of individuals enrolled in schools continued to mount, but the overall ratio of students to the population of school-aged children grew very slowly for several decades. In 1909, for example, 29 per 1,000 were being formally educated. In 1920, 41 per 1,000 were in school.<sup>13</sup>

TABLE 6: LITERACY IN BRAZIL: 1906

State	Literate	Per 1,000	Illiterate	Per 1,000	Total Population
Brazil	4,415,097	254	12,958,643	746	17,373,740
Federal District	387,488	519	359,261	481	746,749
Minas Gerais	920,110	256	2,674,000	744	3,594,110
São Paulo	564,392	247	1,717,887	743	2,282,279
Rio de Janeiro	214,154	231	711,881	769	926,035
Bahia	483,124	228	1,634,832	772	2,117,956
Pernambuco	227,594	193	950,556	807	1,178,150

Source: Anne Pescatello, 'Both Ends of the Journey: An Historical Study of Migration and Change in Brazil and Portugal, 1889-1914', p. 267.

## 2. Recife: Increasing Respectability of American-run Schools

All Protestant schools, with the exception of seminaries, were open to Protestant and non-Protestant alike. Though instructors were not to pressure non-Protestant students to convert, religious studies were a compulsory part of the curriculum. In Pernambuco, as elsewhere, the number of Protestant converts gained through this indoctrination was limited. However, a significant benefit was reaped, nonetheless: Recife's elite increasingly supported the presence of Evangelicals in the Northeast. Upper-class families favoured the Presbyterian girl's school and the Baptist Colégio Americano as

institutions where their children would receive a liberal arts education patterned after the North American system.

That American-backed mission schools should be successfully integrated into Brazilian society in the latter decades of the nineteenth century was more a result of prevailing socio-political conditions than a bonafide shift in the religious allegiance of the nation. The transition from Empire to Republic was a period of radical change for Brazil. Respected academics and leading political figures began to adopt more liberal views on many societal concerns. As the nation entered the twentieth century, and especially in the years following World War I, Brazil increasingly looked to the United States, as possessing models of commerce, industry, and education worth imitating.

Protestants were both opportunistic and effective in seizing their chance to establish educational institutions. Baptist missionary A.R. Crabtree argued that education was a logical strategy for missionizing. He contended that intellectual Brazilians 'generally do not accept the Gospel before being convinced of the superiority of evangelical culture', implying that this could be done through mission schools.<sup>14</sup> Simply, the Presbyterian and Baptist missions were at the right place at the right time to take advantage of the social flexibility of Brazil in the 1880s and 1890s. American Protestant colegios did succeed in winning the patronage of influential Brazilian families. Often, there was fierce competition for classroom enrollment. In 1891, for lack of room, the American

school of São Paulo had to refuse the son of the governor of the state.<sup>15</sup>

In Pernambuco, admission to the Baptist Colégio Americano was also highly coveted. Over the years, it proved itself to be a first-rate institution. Sociologist Gilberto de Melo Freyre and novelist Graciliano Ramos are just two graduates who went on to become well-known public figures.

### 3. The League Against Protestantism

In spite of the increased goodwill of Recife's leading families towards Protestant educational institutions, substantive opposition to Protestant theology still existed in the city in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. This is evidenced by the fact that up to 1886, there were only five denominations which had succeeded in establishing a presence in the city. While there are no precise statistics detailing the size of these congregations, it is likely to conclude that numbers were modest, since in the census of 1900, the aggregate membership of Protestants in the entire state of Pernambuco barely crested two thousand. <sup>16</sup> (See Table 7).

With the separation of Church and State brought about by the proclamation of the Republic in 1889, new tensions arose in the interaction between Catholicism and the so-called 'new religions'. In 1896, a group of radical Roman Catholics in Recife organized the Liga Contra o Protestantismo (The League Against Protestantism). Protestants were harassed, and Bibles and evangelical literature were burned in bonfires in public places. In the interior of Pernambuco, violence escalated, and several Protestants were killed.

TABLE 7:  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PROTESTANTISM IN PERNAMBUCO, 1833-1886

Denomination	Date of Arrival	Date permanent church building officially occupied	Minister(s)
Anglican(a)	1833	1838	Charles A. Austin
Evangelical(b)	1868	1873	Manoel José da Silva Vianna
Congregational(c)	—	1876	James Fanstone
Presbyterian(d)	1873	1878	John Rockwell Smith
Baptist(e)	1885	1886	Mello Lins C.D. Daniel Zachary C. Taylor

Notes and Sources:

a) Daniel P. Kidder, Sketches of Residence and Travels in Brazil. II, pp. 24-25.

b) Deacon Manoel was sent by the Evangelical church of Rio de Janeiro as a missionary to the Northeast. See Judith Hoffnagel, 'The Believers: Pentecostalism in a Brazilian City', p. 20.

c) James Fanstone, 'Our Growing Union', South America. II, 19, pp. 152-154.

d) A. L. Blackford, 'Presbytery of Pernambuco', Brazilian Missions. I, p. 84.

e) Lins was a Presbyterian layman who changed his allegiance to the Baptist church and later became an ordained minister. Missionaries Daniel and Taylor assisted him for a short time. See J. Reis Pereira, História dos Batistas no Brasil 1882-1982. pp. 31-32.

The instigator of this Catholic opposition was an Italian priest, Celestino de Padovali. He and a number of Salesian monks opposed local Protestants, led by Baptist missionary Solomon L. Ginsburg. Ginsburg, a Russian Jew who had been converted to Protestantism in England, had been evangelizing in Recife since 1890. During his tenure in the city, Ginsburg had gained the respect of numerous liberal politicians, for his powerful and convincing denunciation of the actions of the Catholic-influenced city council. When the Liga Contra o Protestantismo began burning Bibles, leading liberals came to Ginsburg's defense, appealing directly to the federal government to intervene in the Pernambucan riots. Ginsburg's ties with Recife's upper class liberals proved to be instrumental in ending this persecution of Protestants. In a telegram to the Governor of Pernambuco, the President of the Republic demanded a return to public order. The activity of the Liga was thus effectively stopped.

Though acceptance of Protestantism as a viable religious alternative was a logical eventuality in the Northeast, actually achieving that acceptance was a long, slow process. Throughout the nineteenth century, bitter rifts remained between Catholic and Protestant adherents in the region. From time to time, evidence of this could be seen in the decisions of regional legislatures, as when Ceara passed into law a licensing fee of two hundred U.S. dollars for anyone wishing to sell non-Catholic books in the state.<sup>17</sup> Discriminatory legislation such as this continued to provoke suspicion and nurture resentment between Catholic and Protestant factions. The constitutional provision of 1824 had granted toleration to non-



Catholics, nothing more. True social equality and a bonafide grass-roots acceptance of Protestant religion were as yet unattained.

ENDNOTES: PROTESTANT FORERUNNERS

- 1 My translation. 'Os quatro huguenotes franceses...começaram logo a vomitar a peçonha que traziam no peito escondida, da doutrina do pérfido Calvino, porque um deles especialmente, por nome João Boles, homem douto na língua latina, grega e hebraica, versado na Sagrada Escritura, adulterava ao modo de sua falsa seita, falava sinistramente das imagens santas, indulgências, bulas, pontífice e Igreja Romana diante de homens simples, no princípio em secreto, depois em público, e tudo isto misturado com humor...'. Simão de Vasconcelos, Crônica da Companhia de Jesus no Estado do Brasil (n.p., n.d.), pp.136-37.
- 2 Abraão de Almeida, História das Assembleias de Deus no Brasil, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), pp.7-9.
- 3 The number of houses in Recife increased from 150 in 1630 to 2,000 in 1639. Walter Wedemann, 'A History of Protestant Missions to Brazil 1850-1914' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977), p.25-29.
- 4 C. R. Boxer, The Dutch in Brazil: 1624-1654 (Hamden, Connecticut, 1973), p. 58.
- 5 Article 12 of the treaty promised the aforementioned freedoms for English Protestants. Fernando de Azevedo, Brazilian Culture (New York, 1950), p.157.
- 6 Robert Walsh, Notices of Brazil in 1828 and 1829, 2 vols (New York: 1831), I, 182.
- 7 Daniel P. Kidder, Sketches of Residence and Travels in Brazil (Philadelphia, 1845), I:188-189, 256, 314.
- 8 Richard Graham, Britain and the onset of Modernization in Brazil 1850-1914 (Cambridge, 1968), p.283.
- 9 The most famous Protestant institutions were Universidade Mackenzie in São Paulo; Instituto Granbery in Juiz de Fora; Gamon Institute, also in Minas Gerais; Instituto Central do Povo in Rio de Janeiro; and Escola Industrial e Agrícola in Ponte Nova, Bahia.

Presbyterian secondary schools were Colégio Internacional, Colégio Morton in São Paulo. Methodists founded Colégio Piracicabano and Colégio Isabella Hendrix in Belo Horizonte; Colégio Metodista in Ribeirão Preto; and Colégio Evangelico Mixto in Porto Alegre. Baptist schools were Colégio Taylor-Ealdio in Bahia; Colégio Americano Batista in Recife; Colégio Batista Brasileiro in São Paulo; Colégio Batista Shephard in Rio de Janeiro; Colégio Batista Mineiro in Belo Horizonte; and Colégio Batista in Campos.

- 10 For example, it is now known that individuals achieving the highest levels of education (university graduation or advanced degrees) tend to be more tolerant of fringe members of society and are less likely to be overtly racist [eg. the percentage of interracial marriage increases among Degreed individuals].
- 11 Rui Barbosa, Reforma Ensino Primeiro (Rio de Janeiro, 1883), p.81.
- 12 Anne Pescatello, 'Both ends of the Journey: An Historical Study of Migration and Change in Brazil and Portugal, 1889-1914' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 1970), p.276.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 A. R. Crabtree and Antônio N. Mesquita, História dos Batistas do Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1937), p. 127.
- 15 Walter Wedemann, 'A History of Protestant Missions to Brazil, 1850-1914' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1977), p.172.
- 16 There were 2,048 Protestants in all of Pernambuco, according to the government census of 1900. See Censo Demográfico - Pernambuco 1940.
- 17 American Bible Society, Report. (1886).

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### III. BEGINNINGS: THE BIRTH OF A NEW RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT IN BRAZIL

#### A. Pentecostalism founded in the North and Northeast

##### 1. Vingren and Berg, Pentecostal Pioneers: The Journey to Belém: 1909-10

The history of Pentecostalism in Brazil begins in 1910, with the arrival of Swedish-born missionaries Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg, in Belém do Pará. As immigrants living in the United States, both men were active members of a Baptist denomination. Berg was a farm labourer who was involved as a lay leader in his church; Vingren was a salaried minister. While still members of their respective Baptist congregations, both men experienced the spiritual phenomena of tongues-speaking during the turn-of-the-century revival movement that swept midwestern America. Vingren and Berg were both summarily expelled from their churches after admitting to their ecstatic spiritual experience. Consequently, both men joined congregations of a newly-established American Pentecostal denomination called the Assemblies of God.

Vingren and Berg first met one another during an evangelical rally in Chicago, Illinois in 1909. Later, in the summer of 1910, both were guests in the home of a mutual friend, Olof Ullidin. One night, Ullidin experienced an usually vibrant dream. In his subconscious state, he saw the word 'Para' fixed directly before his eyes. Ullidin believed that the content of his dream was a supernatural revelation of God's will for one or both of his young houseguests.<sup>1</sup> None of the three men knew what 'Para' might be, but by

consulting a world map in the city library, they discovered it was a state in northern Brazil.

At first, the men judged that a missionary appointment to Pará could not be divine direction. South America was far away; surely if God required their services, He would send them somewhere closer to home! However, after the course of one week in which Vingren and Berg fasted and prayed for divine guidance, they concluded that God was indeed directing the two of them to go as a ministry team to Pará.

When Vingren and Berg made public their decision to enter missionary ministry in Brazil, members of their churches were less than enthusiastic in their support. Congregational members pointed out the difficult climatic adjustments the men would have to make and the financial hardships involved in an undertaking of this magnitude. Workmates argued with Daniel Berg: 'You can also preach the Gospel here, Daniel. It's not necessary to leave Chicago'.<sup>2</sup> No one offered to assist the men, either through prayer or monetary support. Still, in spite of these negative responses, the men determinedly persisted that they were called of God to minister in Brazil.

Through a series of unusual encounters, the men acquired funds for travel from the American Midwest to New York City, and for two third-class tickets on a freighter bound for Brazil.<sup>3</sup> During the sea voyage, Vingren and Berg distributed gospel tracts and missionized among other shipboard passengers. Over the course of the two-week journey, three people were converted to a Pentecostal faith as a result of the Swedes' evangelistic endeavours.<sup>4</sup> On November 19, 1910,

after fourteen days at sea, Vingren and Berg arrived in Belém do Pará, penniless, homeless, and in the midst of a yellow fever epidemic.

Since the two missionaries had no one awaiting their arrival in Belém, they simply followed other disembarking passengers and wandered toward the town centre. Outside a mainstreet bank, Vingren and Berg chanced to encounter the harbour master of Belém, who had seen the two men on the docks and judged them to be foreigners. He greeted them in English. Vingren and Berg were elated to find someone with whom they could converse, and who was a ready source of information and assistance. When the harbour master discovered that Vingren previously had been a Baptist minister in the United States, he immediately guided the men to the Belém Baptist Church. No one could have foreseen that this brief encounter between the three men foreshadowed life-long friendship and partnership. Adriano Nobre, harbour master of Belém, very shortly thereafter became a Pentecostal convert, and eventually, one of the most outstanding preachers, fearless evangelists and influential leaders of early Brazilian Pentecostalism.

## 2. Prayer Meetings, Personal Evangelism, and Public Ministry: 1911-14

Soon after the arrival of Vingren and Berg in Belém, the local Baptist pastor offered them residence in rooms adjoining the church. From their back-room quarters in the church building, the two missionaries organized prayer meetings for townspeople who were in need of divine healing. Along with many in Belém who were sick with yellow fever, there were scores of lepers in the city.<sup>5</sup> It was reported that many people were healed of various sicknesses during the

prayer meetings conducted by Vingren and Berg. The fact that the foreigners themselves continued in good health in the midst of the yellow fever epidemic was interpreted by the townspeople as a sign that God had indeed sent the men as missionaries to Pará. Little by little, Vingren and Berg began to gain the trust of the working-class community in Belém. As attendance at their meetings continued to grow, the missionaries began to preach the Pentecostal experience of tongues-speaking as a complementary message to that of divine healing, stressing that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit was a phenomenon distinct from and subsequent to spiritual salvation.

With the help of Adriano Nobre, Vingren and Berg began to learn to speak Portuguese. As they became increasingly fluent in the language, the Swedes began to widen their base of evangelism to areas adjacent to Belém. One of their first ventures was to obtain a boat, in order that they could visit growing Pentecostal congregations on the islands of Pará. The boat which the missionaries purchased for their journeys along the Amazon and to the islands was named Boas Novas ('The Good News', a euphemism commonly used by American revivalists to refer to the Gospel story). With the use of this ship, Vingren and Berg pioneered a Pentecostal church on the Ilha de Marajó, at the mouth of the Amazon river. When travel by water was not possible, the missionaries travelled by foot. On one occasion, Daniel Berg walked between Belém and Bragança--more than four hundred kilometres--in order to sell Bibles and scripture portions.<sup>7</sup>



Plate 1: Swedish Missionaries present at the First National Conference of the *Assembleias de Deus*: Natal, 1930. Daniel Berg is seated at the extreme left. Gunnar and Frida Vingren are seated in the centre of the picture. (Source: Ivar Lundgren, Levi Pethrus: I N rbygd (Stockholm, 1984), p. 31)



Plate 2: The 'Boas Novas': The Ship used by Vingren and Berg for missionary work along the Amazon. (Source: *Ibid.*, p.30)



At the conclusion of just four years of ministry, Vingren and Berg together with Nobre and other co-workers, had made a substantial impression on the community of Belém. Gunnar Vingren took careful account of each conversion and baptism in the church, and recorded the following statistics for the years 1911-1914:

TABLE 8: ASSEMBLEIA DE DEUS, BELÉM: 1911-1914

<u>Year</u>	<u>Baptized in Water</u> (Conversions)	<u>Baptized in the Holy Spirit</u> (Tongues-speaking)
1911	13	4
1912	41	15
1913	140	121
1914	190	136
Total:	384	276

Source: Ivar Vingren, O Diário do Pioneiro Gunnar Vingren, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), pp. 65-66.

Altogether, during the initial four-year period of a Pentecostal presence in Belém, nearly four hundred people were baptized in water as a public declaration of their adherence to the new religious sect. Three-quarters of all Pentecostal converts also experienced the phenomena of speaking in tongues. The assembly's continued growth caused repercussions throughout the state, as daughter churches were planted by Belém Pentecostals as they evangelized up and down the Amazon and into the interior of Pará, Maranhão, and Ceará.

### B. An Indigenous Church: Building a sense of 'family', not foreignness

The fact that the Belém assembly evidenced no appreciable difference in numbers between those who were being converted and those who also received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit indicates that the church congregation was, in its inception, a primary social group. Members were fairly uniform in their spiritual experience, and all individuals were known personally by the others in the congregation. Public testimony services in which individuals rehearsed their conversion stories worked as psychological glue to cement bonds of understanding and concern between church members. Through other aspects of Pentecostal liturgy, such as group prayer and joyful, emotional worship, further solidarity was achieved. The fact that the Belém Pentecostals felt socially isolated--living in the midst of a community where there were many more Catholics and non-evangelical Protestants--was an added incentive to develop a strong personal faith and to protect the unity of the assembly.

This tendency to draw inward for the sake of group preservation was a factor which led to greater sectarianism on the part of Pentecostals. In turn, this largely self-imposed religious and social segregation spawned a variety of reactions from both the religious and secular communities, as people became polarized in their view on the so-called 'new religion'. Numerous existing churches discovered that congregational loyalties were split, when discussions on Pentecostal doctrine and practice spilled over into their ranks. Controversial topics such as tongues-speaking and divine healing provoked unpredictable responses from members of non-Pentecostal denominations.

# 1. Conflict & Conversions: Confrontations with Denominational Churches

## a. Vingren and Berg: Precedent Encounters in America

Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg were no strangers to the difficulties inherent in defining the place of Pentecostalism within the confines of mainstream Protestantism. When Pentecostalism first burst onto the scene in the United States, its practices seemed radical to many traditional churchgoers. Members of the same denomination and even the same local church could not decide what actions or attitudes were appropriate to take in dealing with tongues-speakers. Some Pentecostal evangelists attempted to remain within denominational bounds, others chose or were forced to renounce their previous religious affiliation. Vingren and Berg were indicative of those who at first sought a conciliatory path, trying to maintain allegiance to both sets of their spiritual roots. Following his dismissal from a Baptist pastorate in Michigan because of sermonizing about tongues-speaking, Vingren did not wish to withdraw his membership from the denomination. Rather, he looked for a congregation more amenable to his message. Vingren was invited to pastor a Baptist assembly in Indiana, where the entire church adopted Pentecostal practices without changing their denominational affiliation. 6 This occurred in 1910, only months before the two missionaries left the United States for Brazil. It is not surprising then, that when Vingren and Berg arrived in Brazil, they continued for some time to seek to develop cooperative evangelistic efforts with the Baptist mission which was already established in the city of Belem.

b. Controversies in Belém

Vingren and Berg preached to their Brazilian constituents that it was possible to remain Baptists, but Baptists baptized by the Holy Spirit. Personal spiritual devotion had been enhanced by the Pentecostal experience, they claimed; radical revision of church doctrine was neither the intent of the movement nor the issue at stake. However, leaders in the Protestant community in Belém did not see the new evangelicalism in the same non-threatening light. Tongues-speaking soon became a contentious issue, as many old-line evangelicals refused any continued association with the Pentecostals. Non-Pentecostal observers argued that people who spoke in tongues were practising spiritual snobbery, and that by virtue of a self-validating supernatural experience, Pentecostals were attempting to elevate themselves to a position of religious superiority. As well, manifestations of Pentecostal behaviour in the public meetings conducted by Vingren and Berg were shocking and even offensive to many traditionalists. The overt emotionalism that often accompanied tongues-speaking--crying, laughing, joyful shouting--was viewed by some middle-class critics as an embarrassing display, demonstrating both a lack of inhibition and a religious immaturity.

The tension between Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals in the four Protestant churches of Belém continued to mount, until the seething pot of controversy boiled over. Ministers from the city's Anglican, Methodist and Presbyterian churches were angry that their parishoners were attending the Pentecostal revival meetings and that Vingren and Berg maintained an open-door policy in their home, admitting

interested enquirers at any time of the day or night if they wished to talk about the phenomenon of the Holy Spirit or have prayer for healing. Although the missionaries' friendly attitudes toward spiritual seekers gained favour for them with many townspeople and indirectly won many to their cause, their aggressive evangelistic style alienated them from the leaders of the denominational churches.

During the Sunday service in the Belém Baptist Church on June 10, 1911, seven months after the arrival of the Swedes in Brazil, Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal members of the church began to quarrel. The non-Pentecostal members of the congregation, the larger of the two factions, demanded the ouster of the missionaries from their quarters at the back of the church. On June 13, at a subsequent congregational meeting, twenty-one people were expelled from membership, inclusive of the church superintendent and the two missionaries. These eleven women and ten men decided to organize their own church--a Pentecostal church--in the home of group members Celina and Henrique de Albuquerque.

## 2. Fashioning a Brazilian Identity

Initially called 'A Missão de Fé Apostólica' (The Mission of Apostolic Faith), this small group of Pentecostals became the nucleus of a rapidly-growing congregation. Individuals who had been baptized in the Holy Spirit during the prayer meetings organized by Vingren and Berg but who until this time had remained in membership at other Protestant churches in Belém, quickly moved to throw their support behind the house church, now that the movement was no longer centered in an annex of the local Baptist assembly. Still, it was a somewhat

reluctant process whereby the Pentecostal group disassociated itself from all denominational ties. Vingren and Berg regretted that rather than renewing the established Church, they had been forced to break with it.

However, the appeal and the rapid growth of Pentecostalism among the states of the Northeast owed a considerable debt to the very fact that the movement was divorced from all existing denominational Churches. Historically, most Brazilians had viewed non-Catholic religious movements with suspicion and contempt. Anglicanism and Methodism were regarded as necessary evils, a by-product of economic progress and commercial expansion. Later, the establishment of Presbyterian (1862) and Baptist (1882) missions in Brazil signaled the increasing intervention of the United States in the economic and religious affairs of Latin America. These intrusions were regarded as foreign impositions forced upon a culturally weaker nation. Fortunately, Pentecostalism was never viewed as the religion of any nation with imperialistic designs upon Brazil, and therefore escaped being branded as a tool of oppression or exploitation, following the pattern of previous Protestant 'invasions'.

Although Pentecostalism had been introduced to Brazil by two Swedes, and thus was 'foreign' in one sense, Vingren and Berg had come to Pará as a result of personal spiritual conviction, not because of the recommendation or financial support of a Missionary Society from a nation whose goal was a socio-economic take-over of Brazil. Furthermore, Vingren and Berg had undertaken a serious, long-term commitment to the work of missionizing in Brazil. They intended to remain in

Brazil for the rest of their lives, unless divine direction dictated otherwise. The Swedes chose their personal residence with the future of Pentecostalism in mind, settling into a modest house in a working-class neighbourhood rather than establishing a home in the middle or upper-class sections of the city, where other foreign missionaries normally resided. The two men did all they could to make Pentecostalism culturally relevant and locally based.

Even the men's marital status was a factor which helped both to speed the assimilation of the new movement into Brazilian society and secure the enculturation of its leadership.<sup>9</sup> The fact that Vingren and Berg were bachelors at the time of their arrival in Brazil greatly aided their ability to move freely in the community and maximize their efforts in evangelistic outreach. They were able to travel extensively, to keep late hours in discussion about Pentecostalism with interested enquirers, and to live in relative simplicity. By contrast, most denominational missionaries were married, and had come to Brazil with wives and children. Housing, health, and childrens' education were important concerns to them. The denominational missionaries had to divide their time and energies between competing sources of attention: work and family. However, for the two Pentecostal bachelors, work and family were one and the same thing, the Church.

Vingren and Berg gave priority to the development of their relationships with the local working-class people. This emphasis on socio-cultural assimilation paid off, for when the two missionaries later came under harsh criticism from local denominational pastors,

they had no need to defend their own reputations. Loyal friends in Belém testified to their character and their trustworthiness.

Since Vingren and Berg had established as one of their goals of missionary ministry that they would from the outset seek to fully integrate into Brazilian life and culture, they were also committed to shaping the Pentecostal Church in a manner that would truly reflect the character of its constituency. No funds and no interference came from abroad. When finally on January 11, 1910, the Church was officially registered with the government as the *Assembléia de Deus*, it was proudly independent. No ties linked the new church to a foreign mission agency. Pentecostalism and the *Assembléia* represented a genuinely Brazilian movement. That Pentecostalism received strong indigenous support during several crisis situations in its early history was crucial to the long-term success of the movement.

In contrast, denominational missionaries had had a decidedly foreign introduction to the Brazilian people. Methodists, Presbyterians, and in particular, Baptists, had first gained public attention with their efforts to saturate the country with Protestant scriptures. While this was ultimately very helpful to the Protestant cause as a whole, it did not communicate to the general populace a commitment by the missionizing groups to know, respect, and work with and alongside a national church. Instead, itinerant Bible-selling by foreigners seemed condescending, another exercise in religious imperialism. That denominational missions failed to utilize local colporteurs in Bible distribution and did not maintain a localized



church administration caused its credibility and relevance to be forfeited in the eyes of many Brazilians.

As well, denominational-backed missionaries found it hard to motivate themselves to the evangelistic task with the same degree of fervor exemplified by Vingren and Berg. Quite simply, denominational missionaries were permitted at best only a three-quarter-time, short-term commitment to their work. Since they were supported by foreign funds, it was required by their mission boards that at least once during every four or five year span, they return to their home constituency either in the United States or in Europe, to report in person to denominational superiors and give an accounting for the financial investment of their backers. The continual interruptions in the year-by-year schedule of Baptists and Presbyterians caused by the demands of foreign religious bureaucracy made the achievement of significant long-term goals by the Brazilian Church nearly impossible. There was not even the guarantee that once a missionary arrived back in his homeland, he would be redeployed to his previous overseas posting. With new personnel coming and going from local and regional Church leadership each year, Brazilian Protestant denominations found themselves in a constant state of unpreparedness for large-scale efforts in nationwide evangelism. Projects or campaigns which were just underway in one region or one city when a missionary was ordered back to his home country--sometimes for a period of a year or longer--might never be completed, if he did not return to personally oversee the follow-up program. Or, if projects were continued without interruption, a brand new missionary-leader--one who had no previous

orientation to Brazilian life, language or culture, and who had not yet developed any personal friendships with the people in the locale-- might be brought in to replace the previous project director. This continual meddling in the internal affairs of Brazilian Protestantism by 'big brothers' in denominations abroad promoted factionalism, frustration, and hindered Church growth.

Since Vingren and Berg had no financial or bureaucratic ties to their homeland, they were spared the frustration of outside interference. No formal reporting was required of the Swedes, neither did they work under the threat of being recalled from their task at any time. Rather, the Pentecostal missionaries were dependent upon Brazilian congregations for financial support, just as they were responsible to co-workers in Brazil for their actions and decisions regarding Church matters. This meant that the Pentecostal work was uninterrupted and ongoing. Decisions affecting the direction of the movement came from a consensus of leadership that knew the situation first-hand, not from denominational executives far-removed from the scene. Pentecostals could plan steadily and work indefinitely without foreign hindrance, in order to achieve long-range goals established by local Brazilian leaders.

### C. Patterns of Pentecostal Growth

#### 1. Growth Through National Leadership

Historically, Brazilians have been considered to be a missionized people rather than a people who missionized others. As such, foreign denominational mission boards seemingly did not consider that Pentecostals might employ a strategy for evangelizing Brazil and

establishing a national network of churches based on Brazilians missionizing other Brazilians. Whereas light-skinned blue-eyed strangers with Swedish accents were immediately noticeable in a public meeting, Brazilians speaking regionally-accented Portuguese were just faces-in-the-crowd. When Brazilian visitors showed up unannounced at sabbath services, clerics were pleased. No questions were asked regarding motivation for church attendance. It was assumed that local visitors were religious enquirers and potential converts. By contrast, attendance of foreigners at a church meeting when no prior invitation had been issued by the congregational leadership provoked immediate suspicion concerning the nature and purpose of the visit. Were the strangers present in order to somehow dissuade individuals to a contrary point of view? Foreigners put people on their guard. Their presence was potential for trouble. However, the presence of unknown Brazilians was not nearly so threatening. Deployed as undercover evangelists, Pentecostal lay preachers had easy access into Catholic or Protestant churches all over the Northeast. Utilizing basic skills in interpersonal relations to their advantage in small-group settings, and on a negligible budget and with minimal oversight or involvement by foreign missionaries, Pentecostalism accomplished what no other Protestant group in Brazil had previously been able to do: the new sect succeeded in establishing a self-supporting and self-perpetuating movement which made an impact upon large segments of the population at a grass-roots level.

Stressing the practice of deploying Brazilian-born missionaries aided the Pentecostal cause even further, when attention was turned to

reaching the more socially isolated areas of the Northeast. The fact that there were no language, culture or class barriers between the Pentecostal evangelists and the people among whom they missionized was a major catalyst to Church growth, especially in remote regions. Although winning converts in the sertão had proven to be a difficult, plodding task for missionaries of traditional denominations, Pentecostals found they had good success in establishing backlands congregations through lay-preachers who missionized their own relatives.

Sertanejos who came to coastal cities seeking work were immediately targeted by Pentecostal congregations as valued potential converts. If a sertanejo became a Pentecostal believer, he was soon commissioned to make a special trip back to his home territory and testify to his extended family about the Pentecostal message and experience. In this way, Pentecostalism broke ground in the backlands without much cultural conflict. The message was packaged in an acceptable form; the 'new ideas' of Pentecostalism were supported by individuals whom the sertanejos knew well. As most backlanders considered that city-dwellers possessed superior education, they were willing to carefully evaluate the Pentecostal message, if it was delivered by a friend or relative who had gone from the sertão to the city, and returned. If the messenger was approved as being of sound character and his family was known to be honourable, then his words were worth careful consideration. Changing allegiance from traditional religions supported by foreign professional clergy to a new religion was not so difficult, if the encouragement to undertake

the change came from a trusted insider. Becoming a Pentecostal believer was touted as the way to achieve a religious identity which was truly Brazilian. Allying with Pentecostalism was for many individuals a choice more acceptable than simply maintaining the religious status quo of supporting a Europeanized Roman Catholic priesthood or coming under the foreign headship of existing Protestant missions.

## 2. Growth Through Multiplying Congregations

Although evangelists did occasionally arise in congregations other than the mother church in Pará during Pentecostalism's early years, notable gains in Church growth were tied almost exclusively to the willing witness of adherents of the Belém Assembléia de Deus who were specially commissioned to go on short-term missions to various points throughout the North and Northeast. The strategy of the Pentecostal evangelists was simple. They followed the church planting model most familiar to them, often attempting to duplicate the precedent conditions which helped to establish the Belém church. In each succeeding town or village, the Pentecostal experiences of miraculous healings and tongues-speaking was explained to members of traditional Protestant churches. The novice evangelists sought to renew the traditional churches when possible, but were equally prepared to revolutionize the existing religious system through the establishment of break-away congregations when other courses of action met with sustained resistance.

Indeed, Pentecostals often encountered opposition to their method of pirating converts from other Protestant groups. While Pentecostals

claimed they were favouring their denominational rivals by introducing them to the reality of new supernatural experience, many traditional Protestants denounced Pentecostal evangelistic strategy as underhanded and manipulative. Although denominationalists did not deny the reality of the miracles which often accompanied Pentecostal phenomena, they also contended that such supernatural displays simply strengthened notions of mysticism among the poor and uneducated. Denominational clerics argued that religious commitment could only be established on a basis of firm theology, not on the basis of the spectacular.

Pentecostal intrusions into denominational constituencies often invited confrontation and caused embitterment between church workers of opposing Protestant factions. During evangelistic meetings conducted by Gunnar Vingren in Macelô, Alagoas, in 1915, the word-of-mouth publicity which resulted from the healing of a deaf and dumb woman created wide-spread interest in Pentecostalism among many in the city. When enormous crowds of sensation-seekers gathered at Vingren's subsequent meetings, other local religious leaders mustered a show of opposition to the Pentecostal preacher. Two Baptist pastors accosted Vingren in front of an assembled crowd in the city square. The pastors attempted to discredit Vingren by baiting him with numerous questions of theological controversy. When members of the local Baptist congregation began inviting Vingren to their homes to privately question him further about the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the church officials were enraged. Seven Baptists and five Adventists

were expelled from their respective congregations as the penalty for fraternizing with the Pentecostal evangelist.<sup>10</sup>

In spite of the efforts of denominational Church leaders to deny Pentecostal evangelists access to their congregations, church members continued to defect to Pentecostal groups. In Ceará, the first *Assembleia de Deus* was established in Uruburetama, when an entire congregation of Presbyterians declared their support for the Pentecostal movement. In Paraíba and Pernambuco, defectors from Presbyterian and Baptist churches joined together to form the first Pentecostal congregations in their respective states. Former Baptists became the nuclei of the first *Assembleias* in Alagoas, Sergipe and Bahia. In total, the first Pentecostal congregations established in six of the nine Northeastern states were founded as a result of members of the *Assembleia* in Belém winning sizeable numbers of converts from denominational churches.

Why did denominational church members convert to Pentecostalism, when they were already within the Protestant fold? What lured or compelled them into risking personal defamation or the dissolution of longstanding social relationships, in order to forge a new identity alongside a young, basically untried and sectarian religion? As a result of asking this question repeatedly in interview sessions with both Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals, and in researching letters, newspapers and church archival accounts of these early conversions, it has been possible to deduce several influences which motivated many individuals to switch their religious allegiance within the Protestant camp.

a. An assimilated and indigenous leadership

That cultural, class and racial integration of its leadership was a characteristic of Brazilian Pentecostalism from its inception is an aspect of the movement which has already been discussed in some detail. This social factor alone was sufficient motivation for many churchgoers of traditional denominations to abandon their previous religious affiliation in favour of the new religious movement. Pentecostalism was perceived as possessing a truly Brazilian birth, whereas the other prominent Protestant groups represented in Brazil during the early twentieth century (Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians and Baptists) were all identified with foreign beginnings and foreign support. Pentecostalism avoided being stigmatized alongside its competitors.

Furthermore, Pentecostalism was perceived as innately Brazilian because the pastors and evangelists of the movement were almost without exception, native-born. Not even the Catholic Church, with its lengthy history of service in South America, could at any point claim a totally indigenous priesthood for Brazil.

b. Spiritual Strength Demonstrably Superior to Other Protestant Groups

Another consideration which motivated individuals to change their Protestant affiliation was the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues. Denominationalists perceived that the Baptism of the Holy Spirit represented a qualitative difference from anything they had previously encountered in their religious experience.



In Rio Grande do Norte in 1920, occurrences of tongues-speaking in meetings conducted by Pentecostal evangelists were the catalyst for a complete restructuring of religious alliances in the town of Nova Cruz. Although a small congregation of Presbyterians was resident in the village, its membership had been subject to strong persecution from the Catholic majority. Presbyterian church members were the objects of constant public ridicule and even occasional acts of violence. The church had ceased to grow.

When the Pentecostal evangelist arrived in Nova Cruz and began to preach about divine healing and tongues-speaking, the Protestant community underwent a rejuvenation of faith. The exhilaration of experiencing a visitation of the supernatural first-hand, promoted a new pride in their religious identity. The Protestants were able to bear with greater strength the verbal and physical abuse meted to them by their neighbours. Townspeople began to notice that those believers who had undergone the Pentecostal experience of speaking in tongues possessed an inner power that had not typified the Presbyterian lifestyle. A Pentecostal church was founded with the members of three families who had formerly been part of the Presbyterian congregation and two families who converted from Catholicism.

Whether out of malice, or as a genuine testing of the mettle of the new Protestant sect, a series of severe persecutions was soon directed against the Nova Cruz Pentecostals by the townspeople. Vicente Clara, ringleader of those who had tormented the Presbyterians, shifted his attention to the disruption of Pentecostal meetings. Clara and his followers tried to prevent the Pentecostals from conducting

church services and missionizing in the town. However, something unexpected occurred. As Clara spent more and more time on the fringe of Pentecostal meetings and in the company of the Pentecostals--albeit as an adversary--he became intrigued by the distinctiveness of their lives and beliefs. The result? Instead of Clara overcoming the Pentecostals through means of physical force, they overcame him through spiritual force. Vicente Clara, formerly feared and hated by most of the Protestant community, was himself converted to Pentecostalism and became a staunch member of the new congregation.

News of Clara's conversion sent shock waves through Nova Cruz. In response to his critics, who believed that he had simply lost his will to fight against the 'false religion', Clara defiantly affirmed: 'I [in my fervour] could not stop this church. Now, no man would dare to try and stop it!'. In the estimation of most townspeople, the conversion of Clara had proven Pentecostalism to be a movement of determination and courage, more powerful than Presbyterianism, and more powerful than the bitter hatred of a devout persecutor. Three months after the conversion of Clara, membership in the new Pentecostal assembly had jumped to ninety adults plus children.<sup>11</sup>

The Pentecostal congregation increasingly gained influence in the town of Nova Cruz. On one occasion during a special evangelistic campaign, more than one thousand townspeople were in attendance at a meeting. The small structure where the church was holding services was crowded to capacity, and people were even standing in the alleyway adjacent to the church in order to listen to the preaching and to witness the manifestations of the Holy Spirit. Present at this

service were various city officials, the local judge, and a doctor. At the conclusion of the meeting, the city fathers expressed their support for the Pentecostal cause. The final barrier had been crossed in winning social approval for the new religious sect. José Menezes, the evangelist who conducted this meeting, wrote concerning the event: 'It was a memorable meeting that night, when a new page was penned in the history of the Assembléia de Deus in Brazil.'<sup>12</sup>

Similar demonstrations that Pentecostal power exceeded that of traditional denominations were continually being evidenced throughout the Northeast. In September 1935, Protestants of all persuasions adopted Pentecostalism during week-long special meetings that accompanied the Assembléia de Deus General Conference in João Pessoa, Paraíba. In the public services conducted each evening, forty-two individuals, some of whom were denominationalists and others who were Catholic, converted to a Pentecostal faith. In addition, eleven denominationalists were baptized in the Holy Spirit. After one particularly eventful evening, a long-time worker in the Presbyterian church commented: 'In all three years that I studied in the Presbyterian seminary, I never learnt as much as I have here today'.<sup>13</sup>

c. Allure of Spiritual Vitality, Supernatural Power and Emotional Freedom

Among early converts in Alagoas, special note was taken of the spiritual vitality of Pentecostalism. In reference to those who chose to leave traditional congregations for the new evangelicalism during 1922, a Pentecostal churchworker noted that '...they [denomination-

alists] pray with a hunger for divine things. [But] not having been satisfied with the teaching that they have received in their own church, they finally find the fount of power here, in our midst'.14

Interested observers were intrigued with the display of spiritual power and personal joy that accompanied most Pentecostal conversions. Failing other motivation, sheer curiosity drove many individuals to enquire about the philosophy of the new Protestant movement. Once having indicated an interest in Pentecostalism, it was logical (or so contended Pentecostal evangelists) that the final test of the truthfulness of Pentecostal teaching was to wholeheartedly commit oneself to the aims and goals of the movement. Only then could a sincere convert prove for himself the reality of the Pentecostal experience. Evangelists quoted from the Biblical account in John 7.17: 'If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own'. Preachers taught that experiences such as tongues-speaking, the working of miracles and personal mystical encounters with the divine, experiences which Pentecostals claim as the distinguishing marks of their movement, were occurrences which normally happened only to faithful believers.

In essence, Pentecostalism 'caught flies with honey, not vinegar'. Although members of most denominational Churches were convinced that Protestantism was theologically superior to Catholicism, many Protestant adherents found denominational churches to be morally strict and emotionally lifeless. This dichotomy produced a religious unrest, a spiritual frustration on the part of many denominationalists. Pentecostalism went a great way to helping disenchant Catholics and

new denominational converts see that the Protestant lifestyle was not a necessary-but-bitter pill to swallow. Pentecostal meetings were typified by joyful singing, entertaining and emotional preaching, and displays of miraculous healings. Pentecostal Protestantism effectively combined elements of both freedom and duty. Pentecostal doctrine called for rigid moral purity, but at the same time, Pentecostal practice also allowed individuals the freedom to engage in joyous emotional abandon in the practice of speaking in tongues. Pentecostalism provided both mystical encounters with the supernatural and practical advice on how to live in the here and now.

### 3. Growth Through Bible Distribution

#### a. Early Pentecostal Colporteurs

One strategy for church growth employed by early Pentecostals followed the methodology of older Protestant groups. Just as the sale and distribution of scripture portions proved to be a successful means of advancing Methodist and Baptist missions, so Pentecostalism in its turn, took up the challenge of evangelizing and educating through the use of the Bible. Of the Pentecostal pioneers, Clímaco Bueno Aza, Adriano Nobre and Daniel Berg were all devoted colporteurs, travelling hundreds of miles by foot and by boat to bring the Protestant message to the outlying districts of the North and Northeast.<sup>15</sup> Many solitary and unsolicited conversions to Evangelicalism took place simply because of the silent witness of the Bible in the possession of a spiritually-seeking individual.

The British and American Bible Societies' records indicate that some thriving contemporary Brazilian churches got their start through

the work of Nordestino Pentecostal colporteurs. In the early 1900s, Manaus was visited by an unnamed colporteur who sold a wheelbarrow full of Bibles to a shop owner. Rather than risk rousing the ire of the local priest, the storekeeper did not sell the Scriptures, he merely lent Bibles to anyone who asked to borrow a copy. Although for several subsequent years there was no Protestant witness in Manaus, with the exception of a few passing Bible-sellers, the Bible-readers regularly met together to talk among themselves about the meaning of various scripture portions. By the 1950s, there were five evangelical churches in Manaus, each fully self-supporting and each with a Brazilian pastor.<sup>16</sup>

Frequently, the sale of a Bible was a crisis-producing event. Many individuals who purchased Bibles expressed fear at the thought of reading the Scriptures on their own for the very first time. The challenge to read the Bible in an objective manner was understandably threatening to those who had been told all their lives that Protestant scriptures were 'adulterated', and that only a priest had the power to correctly interpret the meaning of 'God's Word'. One Northeasterner told his friend who had purchased a Bible from an itinerant colporteur, 'If you read that book, you will change your religion and desert your father's faith.' When the two friends met again a few months later, the man who owned the Bible said: 'I read the book. Afterward, I gave it to my father who also read it. We have both accepted its teaching. We are believers in Jesus and do not have to change anything except our lives.'<sup>17</sup> Another man, a self-professed skeptic, was given a Bible by a colporteur who challenged him to read

it. The man accepted the Bible, but he vowed to throw it into the fire immediately when he reached home. On his arrival there, he found that his cooking fire had gone out. He relit the fire and opened the Bible so that it might more easily catch alight. The pages fell open to the Sermon on the Mount. The man paused for a moment to glance at it, and forgetful of time, he began to read through the hours of the night. The next morning the man told his fellow-villagers 'I now believe'.<sup>18</sup>

Using Bible distribution as one tactic in its overall strategy of evangelism was a plan that worked well for Pentecostalism. Often, upon closing the sale of a Bible or scripture portion, the colporteur would deliver a short homily to the buyer. The message of Pentecostal salvation came with the sale, free of charge! Through the distribution of scripture portions and accompanying evangelistic preaching, Clímaco Bueno Aza was responsible for starting churches in locales as far distant from each other as Amapá, São Luis do Maranhão and Belo Horizonte.<sup>19</sup> In some regions of the country, evangelicals gained such strong external identification with the Bible that colporteurs and zealous converts alike were given the popular nickname Bíblias (literally 'Bibles').<sup>20</sup>

In part, Pentecostals also used their campaigns of literature sales to attempt to demonstrate the parity of their educational aims with those of other Protestant denominations and Catholicism. Many Pentecostals tell how they became literate, only as a result of their conversion. They were motivated to learn to read in order to study

the Scriptures. Since the Bible was regularly studied and expounded in both Pentecostal congregations and in Pentecostal homes, the ability to read was a necessary step in maintaining and gaining status in the church community. That Pentecostals and other Protestants supported literacy as an important aid to spiritual development did not go unnoticed by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. No less than the former Cardinal of São Paulo, Angelo Rossi, authored journal articles concerning the phenomenon.<sup>21</sup>

Along with literatura de cordel sellers, colporteurs functioned as catalysts for the encouragement of reading among working-class city-dwellers. Well-illustrated and attractively displayed scripture portions were received by the urban working class with the same enthusiasm they demonstrated for the receipt of cordel folhetos. In the city, colporteurs seldom if ever preached in order to explain the text of the scripture. Most urbanites had had at least marginal religious training, and even among the lower classes, some individuals were literate. Rather, colporteurs preached in order to draw the attention of the passing crowds to the scripture portions on offer. In effect, they were entertainers, competing with the lively desafios of the cordel sellers. In the backlands, however, colporteurs preached with a more direct intent. Few sertanejos were literate, so it was necessary that a personal testimony and a call for Pentecostal conversion precede or accompany any scripture sale, if the encounter was to be permanent and effective. Colporteurs who ventured into the sertão were of necessity, most often also evangelists.



#### 4. Growth Through Opposition and Persecution

That Pentecostalism has found ready acceptance with the inhabitants of the Northeast may be due, in part, to the fact that Pentecostalism and the Northeast possess a degree of social affinity. Much of the history of Pentecostalism mirrors in the religious sphere what the ordinary Northeasterner experiences in the economic sphere. At times, harsh external conditions have seemed to threaten the very existence of both Pentecostalism and the Nordestino. Both Pentecostals and Northeasterners know and understand the frustrations of being regarded by critical observers as existing on the lowest rung of the social ladder. Both are minorities living in the shadow of a majority which is markedly different to them, in style and philosophy of life. Both groups have had to fight to gain acceptance within the wider social sphere of the nation.

In the early history of Brazilian Pentecostalism, the adherents of the movement had to repeatedly prove their commitment to their conversion experience by remaining constant through the pressure of persecution. Both denominationalists and Catholics were perpetrators of persecutions against Pentecostals, in an attempt to eradicate the movement from territory presumed to be already claimed by the traditional long-established religions. In every state of the Northeast, Pentecostals suffered a stern rite of passage before winning grudging acceptance as a bonafide and respected religious option. Carving out that socio-religious niche was often an exhausting, harrowing experience, testing the perseverance and character of the pioneers of the young sect.

In near-systematic fashion, those who opposed the introduction of Pentecostalism to the Northeast followed a gradation of persecution in an attempt to override the new (and therefore threatening) ideas of the upstart Pentecostal subculture with the values of the religious status quo. The process usually began with local religious leaders displaying an affected self-righteous tolerance, ignoring the actions of Pentecostal converts or evangelists. The nonchalant attitude of clerical leadership lent support to the notion that the new sect was of no consequence, a religious fad which would quickly fade. When the movement continued to win converts and consolidated its position as a strong evangelical contender, persecutors deserted their aloof position and began to ridicule the movement, attempting to discredit the sect as religiously immature and emotionally excessive. When these lesser forms of social control were unsuccessful, more severe opposition to Pentecostalism was undertaken. Family and friends of a convert were often forced to ostracize their loved one. By order of the local priest, or under threat of excommunication, family members could not offer food or accommodation to an 'apostate'. Given the stubborn resilience of many Pentecostals to even this extreme form of social rejection, the only recourse left for the opposing religious leaders was the municipal law court. Persecutors lobbied for the drafting of special bylaws, the sole intent of which was to end the unobstructed practice of Pentecostalism. Monetary fines, restrictions on personal activities (eg. no hymnsinging in one's own home) and jail sentences all resulted from the ire of opponents to Pentecostalism. In some towns, Catholic priests virtually controlled all political,

religious and military activity. Where the priest held a tight reign over the local delegado (police chief), persecutors were often free to harass Pentecostal Protestants without any fear of reprisal.

As acts of persecution moved further along the continuum of social control, each successive level carried correspondingly greater potential for aggressive action. Violence accompanied Pentecostal beginnings in many parts of the Northeast. Occasionally, the violence was so intense that individuals were martyred for their faith. In Maranhão in 1940, two Assembleia de Deus members were flogged to death. On several occasions, pregnant women miscarried after being beaten by a mob. Appendix 8 describes the nature and severity of those actions taken against Pentecostals by their persecutors in the formative years of the movement.

#### a. The Catholic Santas Missões

During the first two decades of the Pentecostal presence in the Northeast, the Roman Catholic hierarchy had no organized plan to counter this evangelical advance. Instead, Northeastern bishops decided to take a 'wait and see' attitude, trusting that by ignoring the sect, the novelty of its doctrine and practice would wane, and any converts gained by the heretic movement would eventually return to the Catholic fold. Since Pentecostalism did not fade, but steadily grew both numerically and territorially, a Catholic strategy for the eradication of this competitor became a necessity. In 1929, Santas Missões (Holy Missions) were organized to injure the Pentecostal cause.

The Santas Missões began in Ceará, but soon fanned out to other Northeastern states. In most cases, the Missões were openly directed

by priests, although some worked covertly, behind the actions of fanatical Catholic laymen. Initially, most Missões began with name-calling, hazing and the ridicule of the Pentecostal sect. Rowdy hecklers intent on disrupting an outdoor evangelistic meeting in Pará intermittently threw chicken heads at the preacher. Priests laughingly called Gunnar Vingren 'the Protestant Pope', and referred to Pentecostal tongues-speaking as manifestations of evil spirits. Verbal and physical intimidation was constantly directed against the sect. Baptisms and burials, activities which in normal circumstances would have been conducted during daylight hours, had to be carried out under the cover of darkness instead, in order to protect the participants. Both in Alagoas and in Ceará, Pentecostals were forced to construct cemeteries on their own church sites, since Catholic-controlled municipal councils strongly opposed the evangelical presence, and forbade the burial of any Protestant in public plots.

#### 1. Bible Burnings

When Pentecostalism remained steadfast in spite of intimidation and verbal abuse, more serious tactics were employed by its Catholic opponents. Priests were particularly concerned with destroying or discrediting the Protestant scriptures. In Anapá, the local priest convinced his parishoners to steal the suitcases of Bibles, Gospel portions and evangelical tracts belonging to Pentecostal colporteur Clímaco Bueno Aza. The Bibles and other literature were amassed into a bonfire in the public square, and Aza was stoned by a frenzied crowd. Gunnar Vingren records in his diary that he was present in a public gathering where a priest declared

the Bible can only be understood by priests and cannot be interpreted by the people. Salvation is achieved only through the mediation of the saints, the practice of good works, and then the passage through purification in Purgatory. Only by this can persons go to Heaven. Those who do not go to mass and do not practise Catholic ritual are of the Devil...If someone reads the Protestant Bible, for this alone, this person will go to Hell!'.<sup>22</sup>

In Morada Nova, Ceará, a Catholic priest instigated riots and Bible burnings after a prominent citizen of the town, Antônio Batista, was converted to Pentecostalism. In an unstoppable rage after the Bible burning, the priest roused the mob to burn all Pentecostal hymnals as well. In spite of this opposition, the Pentecostal movement continued to grow in the município. News of the Bible burnings in Morada Nova aroused keen interest in the message of Pentecostalism among the large landholders of the region. Evangelist Cícero Paulo was invited in turn to several Fazendas, where he made a reasoned defense for Pentecostal beliefs.<sup>23</sup> People witnessed first-hand the faithful dedication of converts. The public was interested in knowing what ideas so troubled the established church that aggressive violence was needed to keep the intruding philosophy at bay.

#### 11. Mob violence

In Fortaleza, people were equally as curious as those in the Cearense interior when it came to discovering the tenets of Pentecostal doctrine. Evangelists were greeted with comments indicating the public's interest but ignorance concerning the movement: 'Preach the Gospel in Fortaleza? What strange ideas are these? The Baptism of the Holy Spirit? Who invented that thing?'.<sup>24</sup> Swift retribution was meted out to apostates from Catholicism, when the parish

leadership led a mob action against local Pentecostals. Shouting and threatening, the mob made its way to the rented hall in which the Pentecostals were conducting meetings. While the service was still in progress, the mob stormed the building, broke in and began to pelt the congregation with stones. Grouping together in the middle of the meeting hall, the Pentecostals shouted prayers for deliverance and for their persecutors. This show of non-violent protest by the Pentecostals contrasted strongly with the calculated and harsh opposition perpetrated by the Catholics. The intentions of the parish radicals backfired. Rather than stifling the witness of the evangelical church, they had unwittingly provoked public sympathies in its support. Numerical growth of the Northeastern sect continued.

An incident in Maranhão produced a similarly negative reaction by townspeople against the Catholic church. In 1940, Italian priest Camillo de Lonati sanctioned the stoning of Pentecostals in his parish of Grajaú. A mob broke into the Pentecostal church, smashing benches, the pulpit and the one light fixture. Catholic opposition to the Pentecostals was so fierce and so relentless, that the only recourse for the evangelical group was to keep moving the location of its meetings, so that the Missões could not devise a strategic attack against it. The Pentecostals decided to fight back against the 'Holy Mission' through social rather than military means. Assemblêia de Deus members undertook a systematic house by house, street by street visitation of the entire city. In effect, the believers staged an enormous public relations campaign. They witnessed of their faith to anyone who would listen, prayed with anyone who needed physical

healing, and attempted to sidestep any unfriendly opposition. By making every effort to gain the sympathies of nominal Catholics, by taking charge of how they were perceived in the public eye, and by exerting care to project themselves as adherents of a rational, legitimate movement, Pentecostals won limited public support. For the time being, it was enough.

In other areas of the Northeast, the battle to hold the line against evangelical encroachment was equally hard-fought. The anti-Pentecostal campaigns fostered by Santas Missões took on near-epic proportions in some locales. In Sobral, Ceará, a group of three thousand men surrounded a pensão where two Assembléia evangelists were staying. An entire detachment of police was barely able to save the Pentecostals from being lynched. The next day, the instigators of the mob lay in wait for the evangelists to leave the pensão. When the Pentecostals left the city to visit a church in the neighbouring town of Ipu, the mob pursued them and began to stone them, but again the evangelicals escaped. Later that night, the band of Catholic radicals regrouped and headed for Ipu. There they waited in the city centre, until the authorities had switched off the lights of Ipu for the night. Then, the mob headed straight for the house where the Pentecostal evangelists were lodged. The same delegado and his detachment from Sobral were there to counter the potential riot. The detachment had somehow received an anonymous warning of the plan to murder the evangelists, and was in Ipu to lend support to the local police force in the event of trouble. Through their intervention, a potential crisis was averted.

No less striking was the turn of events which occurred in Picos, Piauí in April, 1944. This incident is worth considering in some detail, as it is indicative of the fierce and doggedly perseverant opposition encountered by Pentecostals in numerous Northeastern locales. The drama in Picos surrounded *Assembléia de Deus* lay preacher Catarino Varjão. Unlike many *Assembléia* workers, Varjão was not an itinerant evangelist, but a pioneering pastor. He settled in Picos with his family and rented a hall in which to conduct evangelistic meetings. Varjão had no intent to go elsewhere if his mission in Picos failed. He was committed to remaining in the city, at any cost. This determination brought to a head a fascinating struggle of will between Varjão and the local priest, Padre Ariberto. That Varjão took up residence in the city was in direct challenge to the theme of numerous homilies given at mass by the padre. Padre Ariberto had boldly declared that Pentecostals would never evangelize in his parish! Catarino Varjão decided he would test Ariberto's conviction.

During the early weeks of Varjão's residency in Picos, he and his family were objects of intense scrutiny. Children constantly followed Varjão, touching him, listening to him speak, watching when and what he ate. The children had somewhere absorbed the notion that Pentecostals were so strange that they were biologically different from other people! Padre Ariberto observed the evangelicals without any outward show of opposition, while he busily organized a programme of resistance to the Protestant family. The Pentecostals had worked very quickly to establish an evangelistic centre in Picos. Within a month of their move to the city, they had won several converts.



Consequently, the priest's initial ploy was to deny Varjão access to the building where the *Assembléia de Deus* congregation was gathering. He ordered the owner of the Pentecostal meeting hall to evict the renters. Next, Padre Ariberto publicly took a vow that he would not rest until the *Santa Missão* had driven the Pentecostals from the city.

The city barber boasted to his co-workers that he would slit the throat of the Pentecostal preacher if he came in to get a shave. One day Varjão did come to the barbershop, and people came running from all quarters to see the barber carry out his threat. Onlookers crowded the windows and doorways of the shop. The barber was terrified, having suddenly discovered to his dismay that word of his boast had far exceeded the circle of his workmates. He feared that if so many of the townspeople knew of his plan, then in all likelihood, Varjão also knew, and was simply baiting him into some trap that would incriminate him with the local police. With an eager crowd looking on, the barber lost his nerve, and the preacher went home, shaved and unscathed. Only days later did Varjão discover the failed plot against him.

Undeterred, Padre Ariberto continued his quest to oust the *Assembléia de Deus* minister. He forced the local grocers to stop selling food to the Varjão family, and even managed to have the water supply to the Varjão household cut off. The only way that the *Assembléia* pastor received bread, vegetables or milk after that time was through the ingenuity of the new Pentecostal converts. In the daylight hours, they sent their children to play in the neighbourhood where the Varjões lived, carrying bits of bread and a few vegetables

hidden in their clothes which were smuggled to the family. At night, the adults cautiously carried pots of water from their own households to an abandoned well not far from the Varjão property. By keeping a minimal amount of water in the well, the new converts helped their pastor to survive the siege.

The entire town was aware of the harsh measures taken against the Pentecostals for no reason other than their religious beliefs. Interested observers began to sympathize with the evangelical cause. People came in ever greater numbers to evangelistic meetings held in the homes of new converts, and the number of Assembleia adherents continued to rise, much to the chagrin and irritation of the Catholic cleric.

The treasurer of the town council was greatly fascinated by the Pentecostal sect. He invited Varjão to hold a meeting in his home, so that he and other professionals could become better informed about the doctrines of the new religious group without having to fear the reprisals of being seen in attendance at the public evangelistic rallies. Many prominent members of the city, including a judge, came to the councilman's home meeting. However, Padre Ariberto knew of the meeting, and was determined that it should be stopped. Just as Varjão was beginning to speak, the priest and his followers forced their way into the councilman's house. Ariberto had the lights extinguished, and he threatened that his accomplices would wreck the house, unless the meeting was adjourned immediately. In the darkness and confusion, Varjão escaped Ariberto's gang, who were intent on harming him. The judge insisted that Varjão sleep the night in his house, to avoid any

attempt against his life. Although a further succession of upper-class individuals sided with the Pentecostal cause after the display of violent opposition by the Catholic Missão, none of them could enact legislation to protect Varjão and the Assembléia congregation. Padre Ariberto had the unconditional support of the mayor, the police chief and the majority of the local politicians.

The action which precipitated the final crisis between Catholic and Pentecostal opponents occurred when the Assembléia converts prepared to be baptized in water. This act symbolized the cementing of allegiance to the sect, and as such was the target of fiercest opposition by the Santa Missão. Since Pentecostals baptize by total immersion, access to a large pond of water was necessary, in order to perform the rite. Furthermore, since the Pentecostals had previously been attacked by a Catholic mob when attempting to perform baptisms within the city limits, the only recourse the evangelicals had if they wished to avoid a similarly violent encounter was to conduct baptismal services somewhere at a distance from the city. Varjão successfully petitioned the area Director of the Department of Streets and Roads for permission to have access to the regional sluiceway, the one waterway outside the territory of Padre Ariberto's jurisdiction. The baptisms of nineteen new converts were accomplished.

The act of outmaneuvering the Catholic cleric had left him seeking a swift and vengeful reply. Padre Ariberto appointed a certain night when the Santa Missão would murder Varjão. Pentecostal sympathizers heard of the murder plan and smuggled a message through

to Varjão. Members of his congregation urged him to flee the city. In spite of all encouragement to the contrary, Varjão decided to remain in Picos. He simply declared that he did not have God's permission to leave.

On the appointed night of confrontation with the Santa Missão, Varjão and his family were deep in prayer. Members of the Assembléia formed a small human barricade in front of Varjão's house, attempting to dissuade the mob from its purpose. As soon as the lights of the city had been extinguished, members of the Missão advanced upon the Varjão house. With furious shouts they called 'Mata, Mata, Mata...' ('Kill, Kill, Kill...'). Just as they were nearing the property of the Pentecostal pastor, three unexpected and startling attacks of bombs and mortars sounded. The Pentecostals thought that the house had been shelled. The rioters thought that the Pentecostals were firing on them. The mob of attackers dispersed in terror and disorder. After the noise and confusion quietened down, the Pentecostals were left standing in awe. Many of the believers claimed that their unknown protector had been an unseen angel.

The news of the religious rioting in Picos reached authorities in the state capital. A state deputy decried the attacks against the Pentecostals as 'atrocities committed by religious fanatics', and urged the Governor to extend his personal guarantee of religious freedom to the residents of Picos. The Governor's response was strongly in favour of the Pentecostals. He not only guaranteed their right to practise their faith undisturbed, but did what seemed to be the impossible: he initiated the expulsion of Padre Ariberto from his

parish and from the city. A few months later, an even greater surprise awaited the Assembléia de Deus congregation. When the Bishop of Oeiras visited Picos, he referred to the persecution of the Protestants by the Santa Missão as moral crimes: 'Everyone should prostrate themselves on their faces and beg the pardon of God for the sin committed'.<sup>25</sup> In the 1990s, a growing Assembléia de Deus congregation exists in Picos.

b. Vindications of Pentecostalism against its Persecutors

1. Help from Concerned Catholics

The incident in Picos illustrates well the variety of Catholic responses to the Pentecostal presence in the Northeast. On the one hand, there were priests who were hardline opponents of the movement, promoting all things legal and illegal in order to dislodge the sect from any position of prominence. On the other hand, there were those clerics who were less reactionary and more liberal in their treatment of the Assembléias. As far back as 1918, a priest in Alagoa Grande, Paraíba, rejected the indiscriminate violence perpetrated by partisan groups posing as agents of the Church. Padre Luiz Teotônio single-handedly staved off an attack of two hundred armed men against two Pentecostal preachers. His feat is made more remarkable by the fact that one of the assailants he had to confront was an army Colonel who was an important member of his parish. Refusing to consent to an act of murder no matter what the reason, Padre Luiz successfully stymied the actions of the warring group on several other successive occasions, as well.

Although it was uncommon to find clerics who so generously took the part of Pentecostals, many of the Catholic laity stepped in to defend the work of the sect, especially when they knew that people were in jeopardy of losing their lives. In Belém, Gunnar Vingren's life was spared when a woman reported overhearing the conversation of Catholic radicals who were planning to set his house on fire while he slept. In Tauari, Daniel Berg and a group of converts were taken into the home of a private citizen after they had been beaten on their way out of a church service. The man sat up all night with a loaded shotgun pointed at the outer doorway of his home, ready to defend the Pentecostals against the mob should it return.

That Pentecostals were vindicated by the supportive actions of some Catholics was a significant indicator of the movement's growth. Certainly not every Roman Catholic who aided a Pentecostal ended up as an evangelical convert. However, the simple fact remained: Pentecostalism had been successful in modifying the Brazilian public's perception of Protestantism. Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists in their turn had more or less projected themselves as foreign, heretical and of the middle or upper-class. The effort expended by national evangelists to take the Pentecostal message to the Brazilian working class paid dividends, causing religious stereotypes about non-Catholics to be re-examined. Catholic support was not necessary for Pentecostal growth; only Catholic neutrality was needed. The standard objections to Protestantism having been defused, Pentecostalism was free to grow. Pentecostal membership increased,

but more importantly, the movement attained the status of a recognized and accepted religious denomination.

#### ii. Persecutors are Themselves Punished

Long-time Pentecostal adherents are replete with stories of the grim retribution meted out to enemies of the movement. Without doubt, unusual and often extraordinary things occurred to those who opposed the Church.

One particularly ardent persecutor died after bathing in a stream polluted by a poisoned tree. Another was bitten by a snake and died. Another contracted leprosy. A wealthy businessman went bankrupt. In the founding years of the movement in Belém, a man who had the reputation of being a great hunter of wild animals frequently boasted he would someday switch his quarry to Pentecostals, and once having caught them he would dismember them, limb from limb. On a subsequent trip up the Amazon, the man was attacked by piranhas, while taking a bath on the edge of the river. When his remains were salvaged, his companions were horrified to see that his arms and legs had been completely eaten away.<sup>26</sup>

Assembleia de Deus opponents also met with unkind fates after Santas Missões were mobilized against the Pentecostals in Escorial, Sergipe, in 1946. One of the chief instigators of the persecution in this município was the police chief, who on several occasions had simply stood by while members of the Assembleia were soundly beaten. One day, a sergeant from his detachment arrived unexpectedly at his house, long after work hours. When the delegado opened the door, the sergeant shot him at point-blank range, killing him instantly. Not

long afterward, the wife of the police chief became ill. She died a lingering and painful death. Retribution was also visited upon a woman of the upper-class who had taken a leading role in inciting the Missões. She was buried alive under falling debris in her home when an earth tremor rocked the city. One Pentecostal pioneer, commenting on the series of events in Escorial wryly observed, 'the persecutors only harvested with interest what they had sown!'<sup>27</sup>

While physical ailments and financial reversals may have typified the judgments upon some persecutors, the clerics who opposed Pentecostalism tended to be punished through acts of humiliation. In Maranguape, Ceará, in 1936, persecution against *Assembleia* converts reached an intense level. When objects of devotion were stolen from the Catholic church sanctuary, the parish priest named the Pentecostals as the culprits of the crime. Though the delegado searched the homes of the *Assembleia* members and found nothing, they remained implicated as thieves. Later, the missing articles were found in the possession of others, and the priest was forced to make a full public apology to the Pentecostal pastor and congregation.<sup>28</sup>

On another occasion, after being stoned by Catholic parishoners, having their Bibles and other literature confiscated and burned, and enduring continual interruptions by hecklers during church services, a Pentecostal congregation in Dom Pedro, Maranhão, received compensation. During a week of outdoor evangelistic meetings in 1938, Padre Ambrosio Maria and *Assembleia* pastor Alcibíades Vasconcelos became embroiled in an argument in a downtown plaza. With a crowd of onlookers, Pastor Alcibíades challenged the priest to answer numerous questions, testing



his Bible knowledge. To the priest's embarrassment, he could not answer the questions posed by the Pentecostal. The challenge met, and the opposition leader publicly humiliated, the Pentecostals continued their evangelistic campaign without further interference.<sup>29</sup>

These accounts of fearsome retribution against the enemies of Pentecostalism greatly assisted the growth of the movement. The number of unusual events and unexplainable phenomena that occurred in towns where anti-evangelical attacks proliferated were viewed by most observers as too 'coincidental' to be dismissed as mere happenstance. The continuing safety of Pentecostal believers in spite of the arduous attacks launched against them illustrated to a skeptical audience that the miraculous was considered normative in the life of a Pentecostal, and that the claims of preachers regarding the inherent power of the Pentecostal experience were true. A religion exuding such power and purpose was an attractive alternative to Catholicism.

### iii. Strange Bedfellows: Politicians, the Military and Pentecostalism

Pentecostalism profited from Roman Catholic persecution. Having been catapulted to public attention as the avowed target of the *Santas Missões*, Pentecostalism gained the opportunity of presenting its message to a wide audience, and as such, won over the sympathies of many nominal and non-practising Catholics. This was one benefit of persecution. However, Pentecostalism also profited from its position as the enemy of Romanism, since opportunistic politicians and government officials who wanted to make names for themselves by upsetting the status quo could do so, by befriendng Pentecostal congregations.

The rash, harsh actions which Missões often perpetrated upon Pentecostals gave government officials a legitimate point of protest. Politicians could contend that the Santas Missões were not in keeping with the philosophy of a Republic, that the Missões were nothing more than a type of New-World Inquisition. The rioting and mayhem that frequently accompanied the work of the Missões could be used as the pretext whereby a political or military figure could overturn the authority of the Church, something that in ordinary circumstances could not normally be done without fear of reprisal.

That politicians and military men did use the Pentecostals as political pawns can be well documented. In Borges, Ceará, in 1935, the parish priest instigated a Missão against the Pentecostals, and many Assembleia members were jailed. The pastor of the Pentecostal congregation appealed to no less than the State Secretary, who handed down an order that the Pentecostals were to be left in peace, and that the Catholic Missão should cease its persecution. Thereafter, the State Secretary was repeatedly described in the press as a powerful and decisive politician. He profited by supporting the Pentecostals over the Catholics, since his actions, though initially disapproved of by unhappy parishoners, eventually came to be interpreted as evidence of a strong moral stand. This reciprocal aid bolstered the potential of both causes: a political career was given a significant boost, and Pentecostalism won yet another round against its most serious rival.<sup>30</sup>

Pentecostalism even linked itself to the military, when such an association was judged to be of mutual benefit. For example, the state-wide newsworthiness of the Golden Jubilee of the Igreja-matriz

in Recife in 1968 was assured by the participation of Major Vilarinho Gonçalves Neto as a guest speaker. However, while the Assembléias used his presence as a publicity coup, Gonçalves Neto used the opportunity afforded him to solicit church members' support in a government anti-Marxist campaign. The Major complemented the crowd of twenty-thousand on the virtues of 'traditional values' which he perceived in the doctrines and practice of Pentecostalism. The Major lauded the movement as 'a psycho-social movement that opposes a materialistic ideology' and therefore 'a powerful front against the insurrection of Communism'.<sup>31</sup>

In Rio Grande do Norte, an activist lawyer was able to move from association with the Assembléia de Deus into state politics. Although not a church member himself, Antônio Torres Galvão worked tirelessly to stop religious persecutions in his hometown, Itapassaroca. Eventually, building on his fame as a defender of minorities and the poor, he was elected Deputy State Governor of Pernambuco.

The symbiotic interdependence forged between Pentecostalism and political and military figures has frequently proved to be a valuable means of actualizing the goals and objectives of all parties. Interestingly, Pentecostal families do not favour political or military careers for their sons. They fear the moral dilemmas represented by both spheres. Pentecostals decry politicians who survive by succumbing to unethical compromise, manipulation, lying, and the accepting of bribes. Equally, they are bothered by the notions that a soldier must swear an oath of loyalty and obedience to someone other than God, and that--should the circumstance demand it--a soldier must

be willing to kill another living soul for whom Christ died. Pentecostals feel that too many elements of politics and the military are liable to contravene Biblical commandments. Further, both professions foster inordinate personal ego, which is in direct contradiction to Pentecostal teaching on humility as virtue. Paradoxically however, parents often covet pulpit ministry positions for their sons, positions of such influence and power in the religious sphere that in practical terms, the temptation to sin through pride is still an obvious and constant threat! Observation would seem to indicate that in Pentecostal thinking, it is permissible to be egoistic and ambitious for oneself, provided it is exclusively within the confines of the Church. However, to seek such self-aggrandizement in the socio-political or military sphere is anathema.

#### iv. Continued Growth and Prosperity under Persecution

Contrary to all expectation, the Northeastern Church has grown, even flourished under persecution. Even on a personal level, Pentecostal converts have been strengthened through periods of persecution--probationary transitions--during which their faith was put to the test. While some Pentecostals were branded as perpetual outcasts from their former social sphere, most who remained faithful to their Pentecostal commitment were in due time accepted back into their former position in society. For some, the religious change mirrored socio-economic advancement, as well. In 1931 at a saltworks in Soure, near Fortaleza, a shift boss was converted to Pentecostalism by one of the workers on his crew. When the owner of the saltpine discovered he had two Protestants in his employ, he fired them both. Another mine

owner offered the newly-converted shift boss a job, if only he would publicly deny his faith. The Pentecostal steadfastly refused to recant. That he showed strong commitment in the face of community disapproval and criticism won favour for the Pentecostal in the eyes of the mine owner. The mine owner decided to offer the shift boss and his two sons employment, in spite of his previous demand that they renounce their religion. Some years later, after he had become wealthy, the shift boss was able to donate land for the construction of the Soure Assembléia de Deus.

The growth of Pentecostalism was in evidence during the long years when the movement fought to survive the pressures of persecution. As the denomination increased in numbers, so it also continued to grow in its influence and social acceptability both on a regional and national scale.

ENDNOTES: BEGINNINGS

- 1 At this time Ulldin also told Vingren that he would meet and marry a Swedish woman named Strandberg. It is true that Vingren did marry Frida Strandberg, a nurse whom he met during his first journey from Brazil to Sweden, in August of 1917. They were married on October 16 of the same year, in Brazil. See further on Frida Strandberg in Chapter V, 'Spiritual Sculptresses'.
- 2 Abraão de Almeida, História das Assembleias de Deus no Brasil, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), p. 17.
- 3 For further information on the occurrences which led Berg and Vingren to New York and Belém, see Almeida, pp.17-18 and Ivar Vingren, O Diário do Pioneiro Gunnar Vingren, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), pp. 27-30.
- 4 One of the new converts was a member of the ship's crew. Vingren and Berg baptized the sailor, and for some years afterward, the crewman maintained an ongoing correspondence with the missionaries.
- 5 The inundation of lepers was the result of rumours which had spread the length of the Amazon and into the Amapá and Roraima territories, telling that an unnamed herb which could cure leprosy was easily obtainable in Belém.
- 6 Crispiniano Fernando de Melo, an islander who had been converted under Vingren and Berg's ministry in Belém, had returned to his village and there established a thriving Pentecostal work. By the time the Swedes were able to comply with De Melo's invitation to visit the congregation and baptize the converts, the group already possessed over sixty members. See Vingren, Pioneiro, p. 47ff.
- 7 Vingren, p. 51.
- 8 Almeida, pp. 14-15.
- 9 In coming to Brazil, Vingren and Berg had made a radical and complete break with their past. In 1910, Vingren had suffered the humiliation of a broken engagement because of his steadfast determination to go to South America as a missionary. His fiancée had refused to accept his choice of ministry location, and rejected his offer of marriage. It was only at ages thirty-eight and thirty-six respectively, that Vingren and Berg finally married. In Vingren's case, his marriage took place fully seven years after his first engagement had ended. In both cases, Vingren and Berg married Swedish women who joined them in their missionary work.
- 10 Vingren, pp. 68-70.
- 11 Almeida, pp.147-150.

- 12 José Menezes, An excerpt from a letter to his son, (Natal, 1920). My translation.
- 13 Assembleias de Deus, Relatório da Convenção Geral das Assembleias de Deus do Brasil (João Pessoa, 1935). My translation.
- 14 Otto Nelson, An excerpt from a letter to Sweden, (22 October 1922).
- 15 On travelling colporteurs see H.C. Tucker, The Bible in Brazil (New York, 1902); also Fredrick C. Glass, Through Brazilian Jungles with the Book (London, n.d.).
- 16 A. M. Chirgwin, The Bible in World Evangelism (New York, 1954), p.81.
- 17 British and Foreign Bible Society Report, 1951, p.59.
- 18 American Bible Society Report, 1951, p.228.
- 19 Almeida, pp. 265, 357, 358.
- 20 Paul E. Pierson, 'A Younger Church in Search of Maturity: the History of the Presbyterian Church of Brazil from 1910 to 1959' (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Princeton, 1971), p.191.
- 21 Angelo Rossi, 'A Ação Bíblica Protestante no Brasil', Revista Eclesiástica Brasileira, VII, 1 (March, 1947), 45-46. Rossi is the former Catholic Cardinal of São Paulo.
- 22 Vingren, O Pioneiro, p. 52. My translation. Emphasis added.
- 23 Cícero Paulo visited in turn at Fazendas Montes Alverne, Cumbe, Melancia, Povoado do Acude, Juazeiro de Cima, Capos and Serra Azul.
- 24 Antônio Barros, An excerpt from a letter written about his evangelistic campaigns, (Fortaleza, 1922). My translation.
- 25 Almeida, p. 133. My translation.
- 26 Interview with Manoel Soares Filho, 10 August 1985; Interviews with Amy and Harold Matson, 4 October 1989 and 22 November 1989; Interviews with Hazel and Harlan Graham, 15 February 1990; Vingren, p. 54.
- 27 Euclides Arlindo, Relatório: Estado de Sergipe, 1946 (Assembleias de Deus, [Aracaju], 1946). My translation.
- 28 José Teixeira Rego, Relatório: Estado de Ceará, 1936 (Assembleias de Deus, [Fortaleza], 1936).

- 29 Alcibíades Pereira Vasconcelos, Relatório: Estado do Maranhão, 1938 (Assembléias de Deus, [Dom Pedro], Maranhão, 1938).
- 30 By 1943, the Borges Assembléia numbered over five hundred members. Almeida, p. 139-41.
- 31 O Diário da Noite, 20 October 1968. My translation.



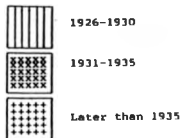
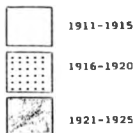
#### IV: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE RECIFENSE CHURCH AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM INTO A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

##### A. The Infant Church: 1916-1927

Adriano Nobre, an early convert and an itinerant evangelist who had successfully planted congregations in Pará and Ceará was sent by the Assembleia leadership in Belém to establish a church in Recife, in 1916. His work was part of the denomination's impetus to evangelism, activated on a wide scale, in the early days of the movement. This compulsion to 'reach the lost at any cost' so gripped the membership that within twenty-one years of the founding of the movement, Pentecostal congregations were established in all twenty-two states of the Republic. (See Appendix C). Nobre began to build the nucleus of a congregation in Recife by holding discussions on Pentecostal doctrine in the home of an interested enquirer, João Ribeiro da Silva. Within a year of his arrival, Nobre had baptized his first two converts in the Rio Capibaribe.

In 1918, Nobre returned to Belém, handing over the care of the small assembly to newly-arrived Swedish missionaries Joel and Signe Carlson. In 1919, the Pentecostals moved their meetings from homes of believers to a small mocambo in the bairro of Gameleira. The Pentecostal church was centrally located and highly visible within the downtown neighbourhood. In contrast to the architectural grandeur of the Catholic cathedrals and even some of the traditional Protestant churches (which by now had been resident in the city for several decades), its facade was simple and unimposing. The feeling that Pentecostals were approachable and that this church was an institution

FIGURE 2:  
THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN THE STATES OF BRAZIL  
IN FIVE YEAR SPANS (1911-1935)



accessible to the ordinary man, was fundamental to the means whereby it grew. Over a period of several months, numerous evangelistic rallies were conducted by the Gameleira assembly. The successful integration of the church into the heart of the community was aided both by its proximity to the people and by its unpretentious atmosphere. When combined with the persistent aggressive evangelism of bairro residents by church members, multiple conversions resulted. Pentecostalism had gained a promising first foothold in the Pernambucan capital.

With this initial breakthrough achieved, a secondary concern faced the congregation. Numerical growth meant locating a larger meeting hall. In 1922, under the direction of the Carlsons and missionary reinforcements Samuel and Tora Hedlund (who had arrived the previous year), the church transferred its meetings to the premises of an old salt warehouse. With seating for three hundred, church services in this facility proved to be a popular attraction in the downtown area. Passersby stopped to listen to the lively congregational singing; beggars found it a likely place to garner alms. Many individuals were converted simply by walking off the street and into an evangelistic service.

One catalyst in the growth of the Recife church came from an unexpected source. A defamatory campaign was mounted by some evangelical opponents of Pentecostalism, but their attempts were unsuccessful. Rather than steering the public away from the sect, denouncements of Pentecostalism as 'modern spiritism' made people curious to judge for themselves if the accusations were true. Crowds

descended on the Pentecostal services, and many were persuaded to convert.

One denominational pastor who objected to the presence of the Pentecostals pressured the local delegado to investigate the accusations against the new sect. The delegado decided to plant an informer in the Pentecostal service, a deputy who would observe all that went on and later report to the superintendent. The deputy came to the warehouse meeting-hall, and looked and listened attentively. When the chamada was given, he was convinced of his need to respond, and was converted. The next day, the deputy gave his report to the delegado. This testimony of an impartial outsider who became a willing convert quelled much of the anti-Pentecostal propaganda.<sup>1</sup>

Since it could not be proven that anything immoral or illegal was happening in the church, and seeing a demonstration of spiritual power present in the meetings, other evangelical Protestants asked to join with the Assembléia. One independent group, sixteen in number, handed over the keys of their meeting place to missionary Joel Carlson. The Santo Amaro congregation was established in the premises of this building, becoming the first daughter church of the central assembly.<sup>2</sup>

#### B. The Middle Years: 1928-1967

After the completion of a three year building programme, the Assembléia inaugurated its first temple, on April 15, 1928. The building was located in the baixo of Encruzilhada, on the edge of a residential district slightly removed from the church's previous location in the downtown core of the city. At this time, the aggregate number of Assembléia constituents in Recife was approx-

imately 1500 individuals. The opening of the new site was accompanied by rapid numerical growth. During the first year in the new location, it was not uncommon for the church to record twenty or more conversions on any given Sunday.<sup>3</sup> Satellite congregations were founded in the bairros of Campo Grande and Pena e Port da Madeira.

In the 1930s, lay preachers and missionaries mobilized for evangelism in the southern and interior regions of the state. Pentecostal works were established in Escada, Palmares, Ribeirão, Garanhuns and Serrinhaem. In 1937, José Bezerra da Silva became the first Brazilian pastor of the *Assembléia de Deus* in Pernambuco. When he assumed leadership from missionary Joel Carlson, church membership statewide was approximately 2500.<sup>4</sup>

On August 23, 1942, at the height of his missionary career, Joel Carlson baptized in water 187 new converts, during festivities which saw the Pernambucan church pass the 3500 mark in membership. Two weeks later, Carlson was dead, apparently having contracted typhoid from the extended period of standing waist-deep in impure water while baptizing the new believers. The death of one of the *Assembléia* pioneers was unexpected and shocking. The *Assembléia* leadership faced a dilemma in explaining Carlson's untimely death, in light of denominational teaching on divine healing. At the funeral service, a male believer from the Recife *Assembléia* was permitted to address the large congregation, telling of an unusual dream which he had experienced, a few days prior to the death of Carlson. In his dream, he saw heaven preparing to receive 'a great prince of earth...this prince was, without doubt, the beloved Brother Joel'. The revelation

of a divine forewarning of Carlson's death seemed to alleviate the crowds' concern. In fact, it is interesting to observe that the Pentecostal documents recording this part of its early history do not even plainly state that Carlson 'died'. Instead, the pastor is accorded an elevated status, with euphemisms used to describe his death, for example: 'Jesus carried him to his heavenly home' and '(he) went to a better life' (literally, 'partiu para uma vida melhor').

During the 1950s and 1960s, membership in the Pernambucan church continued to increase. The church in Abreu e Lima, a city marginally north of Recife, well illustrates the web-like growth of the movement. In its first three decades (1933-1963), the igreja-matriz was twice forced to build new sanctuaries to accommodate its growing congregation. By 1967, the Abreu e Lima central assembly had established sixteen daughter churches (one new branch congregation for every twenty-five months on average during the life of the assembly). The church boasted a total community of seven thousand (including five thousand members and an additional two thousand adherents) who attended any of the 150 services conducted in the various churches each week. The work of leading the meetings was shared between the pastor-presidente of the Abreu e Lima igreja-matriz, one evangelist, nine presbyters, thirty-four deacons, and sixty auxiliaries or lay preachers.<sup>5</sup>

#### C. A Maturing Church: 1968-1979

In 1968, Pentecostalism celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its founding in Recife. Already at that time, the Assembleia de Deus was the leading Protestant denomination in the city. At the time of

the 1912 census, *Assembleia* evangelists had not yet arrived in the city; by 1968, Pentecostalism accounted for nearly half the Protestant population in the city, its growth far outstripping that of the traditional denominations. Even when the numbers of Baptist and Presbyterian followers (ranked second and third, respectively) were combined, their total only marginally surpassed that of the younger sect. Pentecostalism had moved into the dominant position in the Recife Protestant community.

TABLE 9:  
PROTESTANT MEMBERSHIP IN PERNAMBUCO (1912) AND RECIFE (1968)

Pernambuco: 1912(a)			Recife: 1968(b)			
Denomination	N	%	Denomination	N	%	% change
Presbyterian	1,237	47	<i>Assembleia de Deus</i>	18,119	44.4	+44.4
Baptist	598	22	Baptist	14,445	35.4	+13.4
Evangelical	450	17	Presbyterian	5,563	13.6	-33.4
Anglican	300	12	Adventist	1,669	4.1	+ 4.1
Christian	50	2	Evangelical	506	1.2	-15.8
Total	2,635	100	Other	531	1.3	+1.2
			Total	40,833	100.0	+14.0

Sources: (a) *Anuário Estatística do Brasil (1908-1912)* (1927);  
(b) *Estatística do Culto Protestante, 1968* (1968).

The October 1968 golden jubilee of the Pernambucan Church culminated with week-long celebrations in Recife. Public meetings, Bible studies, and choir festivals were held in various locales throughout the city, and a massive open-air service was conducted at the construction site of the new *Igreja-matriz*, Cruz Cabugá. A congregation of over twenty thousand people was present as the

cornerstone of the new complex was put in place. At the conclusion of the ceremony, multitudes of church members paraded through the central city, blocking streets and causing traffic to come to a standstill.

The Diário da Noite commented:

Last Sunday...the city was transformed into a veritable human anthill. For whomever had eyes to see and to observe...this enormous multitude of Christians that filed through the principle arteries of our city. They saw, with certainty, a strange and moving force of courage and idealism: the force of faith.

It is not our purpose to reach a conclusion on the virtues or merits of evangelism by this or any other Protestant church. What interests us is this splendid and moving demonstration of Christian faithfulness which our brothers in the Assembléia have given. This example of faith and belief, in the harsh and troubled hour in which we live, represents without any doubt, a signal that not everything is lost. There is still a spirit of Christianity, sublime and enduring, that transcends all the storms that beset humanity...6

In October 1978, precisely ten years after its foundation stone had been placed, the Assembléia de Deus on Avenida Cruz Cabugá in the baixo of Santo Amaro was officially inaugurated as the igreja-matriz of the Pernambucan Church. The festivities to celebrate this event were similar to those of the golden jubilee, with a week of special meetings and a parade through the city. The week came to a climax with the water baptism of 746 new converts and a service of dedication for the new building. The dedication ceremony proved noteworthy, if for no other reason than to demonstrate how far the Pernambucan Pentecostal movement had come, in gaining approval and recognition in the public eye. Among the numerous and diverse guests who attended were pastors from ten states, some as far distant as Rio Grande do Sul. Several missionaries, chief among them Gunnar Vingren's son



Ivar, were also present. Dignitaries included civic officials, military representatives, lawyers and a judge.<sup>7</sup>

With the completion of the Cruz Cabugá complex and its dedication as the new igreja-matriz of the Assembléias de Deus, a chapter in the history of Recife Pentecostalism accelerated to a successful conclusion. That a variety of church and non-church leaders appeared together publicly at the Assembléia dedication ceremony was an act which heralded a definitive change in public sentiment toward Pernambucan Pentecostals. Pentecostals were able to finally debunk the aspersions of critics who had claimed that the movement practised occultic ritual, and the label of 'sect' was cast off, once and for all. For the first time in its torrid sixty-five year existence in the Northeast, the movement stepped into a new decade without having to concentrate on defending its legitimacy in the Brazilian ecclesiastical community.

#### D. A Church of the Future: 1980-1990 and beyond

##### 1. A Conference Center

The implicit approval extended by city and state government officials toward Pernambucan Pentecostalism after the inauguration of the Cruz Cabugá igreja-matriz afforded the movement an opportunity to grow in its stature as a religious entity. That the church has successfully surmounted this challenge is evidenced in the emergence of the Recife Assembléia de Deus as an important regional and national Pentecostal conference center.

The modern Cruz Cabugá complex is a far cry from the salt warehouse church of the 1920s. With the exception of the temple

constructed in Curitiba in 1982, the Pernambuco Igreja-matriz is the largest building complex owned by the Assembléias de Deus. The Cruz Cabuça church occupies two thousand square meters and has an underground parking lot, a cafeteria, and a library. The sanctuary seats five thousand, and there is additional room for standing room crowds. Gardens and fountains ring the patios adjoining the central building.

Though the complex is large, it is not ostentatious. It has been built more for practicality than as a lavish show-piece. Although three-feet high letters boldly proclaim the building to be an 'Assembléia de Deus', the outside facade is without further ornamentation. A flat-roofed rectangle, the sanctuary is basic and serviceable. Its seating arrangement resembles an amphitheatre, as row upon row of wooden benches fan downward in ever-constricting semi-circles toward the centre of a low platform, where a pulpit and a communion table are positioned. Directly behind the pulpit is a row of high-backed wooden chairs, seats reserved for pastors and church officials. Behind these chairs and in front of a multicoloured gothic window, more pews stretch out to the corners of the building. Choir members and musicians sit here. Unlike Catholic cathedrals, there are no gilded altars, no images of saints, nor even murals of Gospel scenes. Nothing that might deter the worshipper from full attention to the central drama of the preaching is permitted.

The outdoor cement patios are simple and spacious, a feature of the complex which is much valued, especially during the local, regional or national conferences which the church frequently hosts. At these meetings, the number of conferees usually far exceeds the

seating capacity of the church sanctuary. The patios provide the space needed to contain overflow crowds.

It is quite normal--even expected--that the larger number of congregados will have to remain outside the sanctuary during conference services. Meetings are lengthy (frequently three to four hours) and the packed auditorium becomes a sauna. Delegates seemingly ration their store of patience and physical energy so it will extend for the duration of the conference, not wishing to expend it completely in one evening by attempting to sit through a marathon meeting conducted in sweltering heat. Even pastors and platform guests move in and out of the building during services. Due to the length of meetings, the crowded conditions and the active involvement of the congregation in worship, Pentecostal services are a unique spectacle of movement and colour. Congregados sway and dance while singing, move in and out of the sanctuary at will, and during any public preaching, resort to vigorously fanning themselves with hand-held papers or hymnals.

Those who are outdoors follow the progress of the service in the sanctuary by listening to loudspeakers positioned around the perimeter of the church lot. Portable stalls selling evangelical books and music cassettes are allowed onto the periphery of the patio area. Stalls selling food are conveniently positioned just beyond the limits of church property. Recife merchants have discovered that *Assembléia* conferences can provide a profitable week's work.

The routine of a conference takes on a carnival atmosphere. Conferees who have travelled significant distances and who have no



Plate 3: Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá, Recife: under construction, 1977. (Reproduced with permission from an original photograph by Judith Hoffnagel).



Plate 4: Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá, Recife: the Igreja-matriz of the Pernambucan Church, 1985

money to stay elsewhere (even if it only means bus fare to and from a relative's home in the metropolitan area) may be given permission to sleep overnight on church grounds. While the facilities of the Recife Igreja-matriz may be stretched to the limit when hosting thousands of visitors, it is precisely the ability of congregational administrators to successfully organize the logistics of hosting special events that serves to solidify the Cruz Cabugã church as one of the leading Assembleias of the nation.

## 2. An Urban working-class Church

That the flag-ship of the Pentecostal community in Recife is now located on spacious premises, has financial means, and exerts a measure of influence is one indicator of the movement's slow growth to maturity. However, other factors also typify the development of Pentecostalism in Recife and the Northeast. One such factor is revealed in the care with which the movement regards its own history. Although the denomination no longer has to fight for respectability as a mainstream religious movement, part of the church's maturation has been a conscious, careful decision not to remove itself from its grassroots beginnings. The very land on which the Igreja-matriz rests is in the bairro where, in 1919, six Pentecostal converts made a palm-thatched mocambo the first Assembleia meeting hall in Recife.

That the Igreja-matriz of the Assembleia chose to re-establish itself in the city center after some years in a suburban neighbourhood is highly significant. By its very presence, the massive Cruz Cabugã complex has kept a provocative Pentecostal witness alive in the city core. The church is located on the perimeter of the downtown business

district, and is strategically situated at the junction of two main traffic arteries. All buses heading for the city center stop alongside the Assembléia property. Contrast this with the location of the Igreja São Pedro, the city's famous Catholic cathedral. A city bus passes near the Pátio São Pedro, but it is still necessary to deliberately walk out of one's way on a side street to locate the cathedral, which is confined to an almost-hidden courtyard in the oldest part of the city. Also, while it might be argued that Pentecostalism is not unique among her sister Protestant groups in having established a presence in the urban center, it must be noted that Pentecostalism alone has sought a viable congregational ministry there. Although other denominations are visible in the downtown core, their interest is primarily commercial, not pastoral. For example, the denomination second to the Assembléia de Deus in total Protestant membership in Recife, the Convenção Batista Brasileira (Brazilian Baptist Convention) is resident in an eight-storey building in the business district. However, the street-level premises are used for a large bookshop, and the upper storeys for administrative offices. The leading Baptist churches are outside the limits of the city center, in middle and upper-class neighbourhoods.

3. Two-tiered leadership: paid and unpaid ministers working side by side

Further, Northeastern Pentecostalism has been able to maintain its growth and vibrancy while also maturing as a movement by maintaining an ongoing commitment to its method of training and utilizing lay leadership within the Church. From the outset of its presence in Brazil, Pentecostalism has been typified by a form of

Church government in which the majority of church officers are unpaid lay workers who have direct contact with the non-Pentecostal community. This means that evangelism and church planting are achieved with maximum deployment of personnel and maximum cost effectiveness.<sup>8</sup>

After seventy-five years' presence in Pernambuco, Pentecostal Church organization has developed into a workable pyramid of leadership. The administrative structure, a semi-autocratic hierarchy, reflects a typology congruent with a robust, growing church.<sup>9</sup>

FIGURE 3: PENTECOSTAL CHURCH ORGANIZATION IN PERNAMBUCO

	Rank	Title	Paid?
Highest Level of responsibility and privilege  ↓	1.	Pastor	Yes
	2.	Evangelista	Yes
	3.	Presbiter (Elder)	No
	4.	Deacon	No
	5.	Trabalhador (Worker)	No
Lowest Level of responsibility and privilege	6.	Membro (Communicant)	No
	7.	Congregado (Adherent)	No

Sources: Interviews, Paul E. Pierson, 15, 18 December 1982;  
Thomas Fodor, 24, 26, 28 June 1985.

Each rung on the ladder of hierarchy has its assigned function in the overall administration of the church. Congregados, adherents of the church who are not yet baptized members, are frequently asked to open their homes for neighbourhood Bible studies. This is because churchworkers have discovered that individuals who are as yet

unbaptized are most likely to have the greatest number of non-Pentecostal contacts in the community, and as such, are key links in reaching potential converts. Membros are communicant members of the church, and are expected to aid in evangelism efforts by faithfully tithing of their finances. (In fact, if members fail to tithe, they are called to account in a public meeting, and may even be dismissed from the fellowship for a time).<sup>10</sup>

Trabalhadores and deacons carry out much the same work in the church, with two exceptions: while trabalhadores can be of either sex and are volunteers who work under pastoral supervision, deacons are appointed by the pastor of the church, and are almost always male. Female trabalhadores are the backbone of most congregations, raising funds for church projects through a variety of means, and doing much of the janitorial work in the church. Deacons are given the added responsibilities of making home visitations and of assisting in church services in a minor way, such as reading the Scripture, if asked to do so by the pastor.

Presbiteros are elders, or lay preachers. Normally, these high-ranking lay leaders are appointed to their position by the pastor of the regional loja-matriz, in conjunction with the consenting advice of the pastor from his local assembly. Presbiteros travel widely under orders from their superiors. Their function is to missionize.

Evangelistas have nearly all the rights and privileges of pastors, but are not pastors. In essence, they are apprenticing for the position. Typically, they share in the process of management decision-making, yet only the pastor establishes final policies.



Evangelists are normally sent into the interior of the state on a circuit of church visitation, when they officiate the Santa Ceia (Lord's Supper) for small congregations. Since only pastors and evangelists are permitted to perform the communion ceremony, this is a duty which carries significant status.

Within this paradigm, there is leeway for a limited exchange of ideas, and at least a taste of democracy, practised at the congregational level. Deacons and trabalhadores may offer suggestions to help guide the decision-making of their local assemblies, but do not ordinarily have a say in matters of regional oversight. However, any church member has the freedom to speak to regional or national leadership at least once a year, in the business sessions of the Assembléia's annual conference, if elected by local or regional members to be a delegate to the meetings.

While most important administrative decision-making is handled only by a select few pastors, evangelists and presbyters, it is also true that these few leaders are the only paid officers of the church. Still, even to refer to some ministers as 'paid' can be misleading, since regular salaries are rare, and the amounts of payment to church-workers is not often commensurate with the status of being in ministry. Although pastors usually receive a regular stipend from their congregation, evangelists and presbyters often receive only sporadic 'love offerings' from the congregations they serve.

Many church officers engage in part-time employment in order to augment their income. For example, Pastor I., the head of the family with which I boarded during my field study, was a seminary instructor,

as well as a full-time pastor. The pastor of the Missão Evangélica Igreja-matriz, a man who was marginally bilingual, taught English at a Roman Catholic high school as a means of supplementing his income. He frequently commented on the comic irony of his income from the Catholic institution being the means whereby he was establishing a new Protestant work in a predominantly Catholic barrio. Even Pastor M., the northeastern regional superintendent of the MEBPB, was a full-time employee in a bank, in addition to his role as an ordained minister.<sup>11</sup>

The most influential leader in the Pernambucan Pentecostal movement is the pastor-presidente of the mother church of the Northeast. The present pastor-presidente, or senior pastor of the Recife Assembleia (Cruz Cabugá), is José Leôncio da Silva, who has been with the church since the beginning of the building programme on the new downtown complex. Pastor Leôncio is a dark mulatto. That he is the denomination's highest authority in the Northeast is another benchmark of the maturation of Pentecostalism, illustrating the increasing heterogeneity of the movement as well as its role in providing socio-economic advancement for those in the working class. Though Brazilians typically pride themselves on being an egalitarian 'melting-pot' society, it is still very evident that social stratification exists, even in the cultural blending of the Northeast. Since race is one predictor of social status, it is particularly significant that a black man heads the largest Protestant constituency in the same city where the white Dom Helder Câmara, the famous former Catholic prelate of the Northeast, resides. Numerous pardo and preto

youths told me that Pastor Leôncio is to them, an example of 'a successful black man'.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. A Missionary Church

Foreign missions have always been a part of the Assembléias de Deus in the North and Northeast, even from its founding. Less than three years after Vingren and Berg first arrived in Belém, the new believers had already commissioned one of their leading families to go to Portugal to bring the Pentecostal message to the mother country of the 'Empire'. Subsequently, missionaries were sent to France, Madagascar and Bolivia. Currently, the Assembléias de Deus support workers in domestic missions to the Brazilian Indian population and internationally in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Portugal, the United States, Uruguay and Venezuela.<sup>13</sup>

Historically, the Recife church has gained special recognition for its contributions in both home and foreign missions. Evangelization of the Pernambucan interior began almost immediately after the founding of the first Recife congregation in 1918. Although the mother church had a membership of approximately only forty at this time, by 1921 the church had established a small satellite congregation in Vitória de Santo Antão, fifty kilometers from Recife.<sup>14</sup>

In the present era, under the leadership of Pastor Leôncio, the Northeastern church has continued to broaden its commitment to evangelism. Not only has the assembly been active in its efforts to plant churches throughout the seven states of the Northeast, the congregation has deployed missionaries in neighbouring countries, as well. If someone moves, he receives strong encouragement to use the

occasion as an opportunity to missionize and to form a new congregation. Banners and handbills displayed during missionary conferences at the Pernambuco Igreja-matriz declare the commitment of the congregation to their global mission: 'O Campo é o Mundo!' ('The Field is the World!').

The Assembléia de Deus in Mar del Plata, Argentina, is one church established as a result of the work of missionaries sent out from the Cruz Cabugá Assembléia. In 1984, Mar del Plata built its first Pentecostal temple, and just a year later, a second temple was already under construction. During a one month period, twenty-nine persons were baptized in the Holy Spirit, and a child was miraculously healed when one of his limbs was restored.<sup>15</sup>

Planting churches in rural or urban areas which are as yet unevangelized, and engaging in pioneer cross-cultural ministry--activities in which the Recife Assembléia is currently involved and which it heartily endorses--are practices congruent with the aims of the national body of the Assembléia, in its special thrust for further vigor in evangelism as the century nears its close. In June 1990, the Assembléia de Deus General Council officially launched a 'Decade of Harvest' for Brazil, in which the specified goals of the movement are to complete the following, before the year 2000:

- Raise up to 3 million intercessors.
- Win 60 million souls to Christ.
- Prepare 100 thousand workers for the harvest.
- Establish 50 thousand new churches in Brazil.
- Send out a host of missionaries to other countries.<sup>16</sup>

As one of the largest Assembléias in the nation, the Recife Igreja-matriz will have a large part to play in the success or

failure of these goals.

5. Recife's role in Pentecostalism as a national and international movement

In the Assembléias de Deus, the Pernambucan church is linked to a national network of Pentecostal institutions, where it more than holds its own in competition with southern congregations. In total membership, the Recife Igreja-matriz ranks third and the Abreu e Lima congregation twelfth in a list of the dozen largest Assembléias in Brazil. Altogether, churches from the North and Northeast account for nearly half of these 'superchurches'.

TABLE 10:  
THE 12 LARGEST ASSEMBLÉIA DE DEUS CHURCHES IN BRAZIL (1986)

Congregation	Location	Total Members
Belénzinho	São Paulo	110,000
Bras	São Paulo	60,000
Recife	Recife	48,000
São Luis	Sao Luis	47,000
Belo Horizonte	Belo Horizonte	45,000
Salvador	Salvador	35,000
Belém	Belém do Para	30,000
Madureira	Rio de Janeiro	28,000
Curitiba	Curitiba	20,000
Santos	Santos	20,000
Pôrto Alegre	Pôrto Alegre	20,000
Cidade Abreu e Lima	Pernambuco	<u>18,460</u>
Total:		481,460

Source: Information gathered from the Assembleia de Deus headquarters, Estrada Vincente de Carvalho, Rio de Janeiro.

As the table above only begins to illustrate, the Assembléia de Deus is not only the largest evangelical denomination in Brazil (see Appendix D), but in all of Latin America. With its 2.7 million members and an aggregate affiliation of over 4 million, there is no doubt that the Brazilian Assembléias have profoundly influenced the complexion and composition of the Luso-Hispanic New-world ecclesiastical community.<sup>17</sup> Notwithstanding, there are at least three other major divisions within the Pentecostal configuration in Brazil besides the Assemblies, one of which was birthed from the Pernambucan church.

TABLE 11: COMPOSITION OF THE BRAZILIAN PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

Denomination	Percentage of Pentecostal Constituency
Assembléia de Deus	62.6
Congregação Cristã	22.3
Independent Pentecostals	12.8
Pentecostal Churches aligned with foreign mission agencies	<u>2.3</u>
Total:	100.0

Sources: Based on comparative data in David Barrett, 'Brazil' in The World Christian Encyclopedia (Nairobi, 1982), pp. 186-195 (pp. 191-194); William R. Read, Victor Monterosso and Harmon Johnson, O Crescimento da Igreja na América Latina (São Paulo, 1969), p. 67; and C. Peter Wagner, Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming (Carol Stream, Illinois, 1975) p. 25ff.

The smallest group which has had a hand in defining the composition of Brazilian Pentecostalism belongs to those churches

aligned with foreign mission agencies. At present, fifty-three Pentecostal missions have works in Brazil. These include numerous North American and European denominations. On the whole, the communities spawned through their evangelistic efforts are small in membership, and generally are regionally confined.

On the other end of the statistical spectrum is the Congregação Cristã. The second largest Pentecostal denomination in Brazil, the Congregação Cristã was founded by Luis Francescon, an Italian-American Presbyterian who, after experiencing the Holy Spirit baptism, decided to dedicate his life to missionary work. The original and central church of the Congregação Cristã is located in the industrial section of São Paulo, where in 1910 Francescon began his work primarily among Italian immigrants. In 1935, Italian language services were discontinued, as the church integrated with mainstream Brazilian evangelicalism. Most of the growth of the denomination has taken place in southern states, particularly São Paulo (fifty-three percent) and Paraná (thirty percent).<sup>18</sup>

While the relatively recent entry of foreign missionary agencies into Brazil and the nature of the Congregação as a southern church tied to ethnic roots has distanced these two groups from the early history of Pentecostalism in the Northeast, no such division exists between the leading independent Pentecostal church in Brazil and the Assembleia de Deus. The church has strong ties to the Northeast, since its founder was born, raised and apprenticed in ministry in Recife. Manoel de Melo was born in 1929, the son of Catholic peasants who worked on a sugar plantation in Pernambuco. Manoel trained as a

carpenter, becoming a lay preacher and later a pastor with the Assembléia de Deus.

During the late 1940s, with limited education but much experience, he began conducting evangelistic campaigns in Rio de Janeiro, following on the heels of large migrations of unemployed working-class Nordestinos to the southern states. In the 1950s, de Melo separated from the Assembléias and began conducting revival crusades in tent meetings and in open-air stadiums in and around São Paulo. A gifted orator, it was not uncommon that de Melo had crowds of up to 100,000 people attend his meetings.<sup>19</sup> The success of de Melo's crusades were outstanding, and he decided to form a church to incorporate the converts gained in his evangelistic campaigns. Thus the Igreja Evangelica Pentecostal Unida 'O Brasil Para Cristo' (OBPC) was established, in 1955. As early as 1963, the movement was growing at a rate of 80,000 new members annually.<sup>20</sup>

Even though Manoel de Melo no longer lives in the Northeast, his actions still have a significant effect on the image of Pentecostalism there. De Melo's accent identifies him as a Nordestino, and it has not been forgotten that he was a former Assembléia de Deus pastor in Pernambuco. The doctrines of his denomination do not differ from other Pentecostal groups, except that de Melo gives special attention to the practice of divine healing and the working of miracles. However, one factor which does set OBPC apart from both the Assembléia and the Congregação Cristã is in its considerable political ambition, both in Brazilian national politics and in international ecclesiastical organizations.



For example, early in the 1960s, de Melo began using his pulpit as a platform from which to endorse political candidates. Politicians sought his endorsement because of the large block vote he influenced. Eventually, de Melo put forward some of his own congregation to run for political office. Up to the present, many Protestants and several Pentecostals have been elected to local, state, and federal positions as a result of de Melo's support. Even two OBPC pastors have been elected to important political offices: Levy Tavares as federal deputy and Geraldino dos Santos as state deputy of São Paulo.<sup>21</sup>

On the ecclesiastical scene, de Melo has also shown political ambition. In a dramatic and unexpected move, O Brasil Para Cristo joined the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1969. De Melo became a unique and valuable commodity to the WCC, since he was an evangelical, a Pentecostal, and with his joining the Council, the head of the largest independent member church of the WCC in Latin America. The Assembléia de Deus and the Congregação Cristã were critical of de Melo's position, contending that a charismatic evangelical had no business establishing close links with Catholic and liberal non-evangelical churches. De Melo was accused of using his position as a token Pentecostal in the WCC as a way of gaining personal notoriety on the global stage.

For the past thirty-six years (1955-91), Manoel de Melo has been a leading figure on the Brazilian religious scene. His high profile is due, in large measure, to the extensive saturation of the masses through the media. De Melo's radio programmes have made him a household name, even among people who have never been present in any

of his rallies. By 1982, de Melo's daily 'Voz do Brasil Para Cristo' was carried on 150 stations across the nation, and by 1986, live daily broadcasts (seven hours daily) were being heard on 250 stations. As well, OBPC produces a weekly television broadcast which airs in the São Paulo area each Saturday. Over five thousand branch congregations of OBPC are scattered throughout the nation's twenty-two states and in the federal capital.<sup>22</sup>

Big thinking and bold planning--such as that demonstrated in de Melo's stranglehold on the radio airwaves--is repeatedly in evidence in all aspects of OBPC ministries. The Brasil Para Cristo Igreja-matriz, located in São Paulo, is the largest evangelical church building in the world.<sup>23</sup> The sanctuary alone took over four years to build. The main auditorium occupies approximately 35,000 square feet, its walls rising fifty-five feet toward the ceiling. The floor is paved with tinted blocks of concrete, and a row of four-foot high mirrors crosses the room directly below an elevated platform. While the sanctuary is designed to seat fifteen thousand, up to thirty thousand people can be accommodated for special events. A bold sign above the main entrance informs the visitor that this building was built totally without government funds.

So far, de Melo has succeeded in adding to the main auditorium an administrative complex of over fifty rooms, a library, bookstore, bank, restaurant, hotel, laundry, and a gymnasium. The outdoor courtyard of the complex features a birdhouse enclosing more than a hundred singing birds, seven illuminated fountains, a small artificial lake, and a tower eighty meters high at the top of which 300 people

can stand. Ministries of the church include a hospital, a home for expectant mothers, and several schools, including a Bible Institute. Presently, de Melo is working on his most ambitious project to date: the development of 1,500 farms housing forty persons each, to be completed during the decade 1985-95.<sup>24</sup>

As a man from humble roots in the Northeast who has climbed into the religious and political limelight of the nation, Pastor Manoel's exploits seem to be viewed by working-class Recife Pentecostals as a source of encouragement for the common man in the poverty of his daily life. Still regarded as a native son by the Pernambucan church, Manoel de Melo has been a powerful and dynamic force for change and a model of success in the history of the Pentecostal movement.

As Northeastern Pentecostalism continues to exert its influence upon the nation in increasingly wider political, economic and social spheres, it does so at the peril of change. However, Recife Pentecostal leaders contend that although the Church has made accommodations in its practices in order to better communicate the gospel to the modern world, Pentecostals have never forgotten or rejected their spiritual roots.<sup>25</sup>

IV. ENDNOTES: THE RECIFENSE CHURCH AND PENTECOSTALISM AS A NATIONAL MOVEMENT

- 1 Abraão de Almeida, História da Assembléia de Deus no Brasil. fourth edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1984), pp. 163-165.
- 2 Interview, congregational elders, Assembléia de Deus, Santo Amaro (Recife), 30 June 1985.
- 3 Assembléia de Deus em Pernambuco, História da Assembléia de Deus em Pernambuco: 1910-1968 (Recife, 1968). This booklet was produced to recall and celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the church in the state.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Interview, 'Pastor Robson', Assembléia de Deus, Abreu e Lima (Pernambuco), 12 June 1985.
- 6 'Artigo de fundo', Diário da Noite. 28 October 1968. My translation.
- 7 Those present included Colonel Vilarinho Neto, Colonel Felix Ventura da Silva, Major Walter da Rocha, lawyers Augusto Lucena and Gideão dos Santos, and Dr. Antônio Pessoa Leite, a judge.
- 8 Contrast this with Donald McGavran's (1980) paradigm of a stagnant or dying church: the declining church is top-heavy in paid administrative positions, and is understaffed in areas of voluntary service. 'Consumerism'—i.e. members who receive all the benefits of the church including pastoral care and even financial aid, but who do not give back any of their time or money to the institution—may run as high as sixty percent.
- 9 See Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth, Fully Revised, (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1980); C. Peter Wagner, Your Church can Grow and Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming (Carol Stream, Illinois, 1975), p. 110 ff.
- 10 Attendance at church business meeting, Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela, 23 June and 28 July 1985; Interviews with Heather Chaloner, 30 July 1985 and Stephen Chaloner, 28 June 1985.
- 11 There were times when the desires of 'the pastor' conflicted with the responsibilities of 'the employee'. During my tenure in Recife, Pastor M. was transferred from a bank in Natal to a branch office in Rio Branco, Acre, nearly 2300 miles away! It was necessary for him to temporarily hand over his duties as regional director of the churches to another member of the district committee. Interview with Pastor Izirlei Vleria Guimarães, 30 May 1985; Interview with Pastor Moises Francisco de Oliveira, 7 June 1985; Interview with Pastor Manoel Soares Filho, 10 August 1985.

- 12 Interviews with Beth Brooks, (Igreja da Fé), 4 June 1985; 'Irmã José Claydee', (Igreja Batista Renovada; ADHONEP youth), 15 June 1985; 'Irmã Nira', (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 14 July 1985; José Guime de Moura, (Military Service, Recife), 13 July 1985; Rivalva Maria Barros da Silva (Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela), 30 July 1985; Valdejane Ramos (Seminary student, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste), 21 July 1985.

The pastor-presidente is a powerful preacher and a model of piety to his congregation. I once witnessed Pastor Leôncio kneel in silent prayer for forty minutes during the course of a service, prior to preaching. (Attendance at evening service, Assembleia de Deus, Avenida Cruz Cabugá, Recife; 25 July 1985). Actions like this impress churchgoers with the fervour and dedication Pastor Leôncio gives to his pastoral task. The Recife pastor-presidente is often a featured conference speaker at venues throughout the country. Through his ministry the influence of the Pernambuco Church extends far beyond state boundaries.

- 13 On 4 April 1913, José Plácido da Costa and his family departed for Portugal. In 1921, José de Matos was sent in support of da Costa. They succeeded in establishing congregations in the Algarve and in the northern interior Beiras. See Almeida, pp. 352-353 for information on the early Portuguese ventures; See further Walter J. Hollenweger, The Pentecostals (London, 1972), p. 78, on missions to France and Madagascar.
- 14 Judith Hoffnagel, 'The Believers: Pentecostalism in a Brazilian City' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978), p. 33.
- 15 Cruz Cabugá missionary Ailton José Alves is presently pastoring in Mar del Plata. At the ceremony placing the cornerstone for the foundation of the second temple, Pastor Dario Tavares de Araújo journeyed from Recife to represent Pastor José Leôncio da Silva. Juan Bautista del Favero, 'Missões: Argentina', Mensageiro da Paz, 1178 (1985), p. 23.
- 16 Dave and Sherry Harrison, 'Missionary News', Northwest Messenger, 51:5 (1990), p. 12.
- 17 For the most comprehensive statistics detailing each religious group and denomination in Brazil, see David Barrett, 'Brazil' in The World Christian Encyclopedia (Nairobi, 1982), pp.186-195 (pp. 191-194). For statistical comparisons between the churches of Latin America, see William R. Read, Victor Monterroso and Harmon Johnson, O Crescimento da Igreja na América Latina (São Paulo, 1969), p.67. See also C. Peter Wagner, Look out! The Pentecostals are Coming (Carol Stream, Illinois, 1975).
- 18 Barrett, p. 191. A unique budgeting system permits the denomination to rent or construct, on average, seventy-five new

chapels throughout the country each year. (See Read, Crescimento, p. 69) Local assemblies send tithes from their weekly collections to the denomination's national finance department, which then re-distributes funds to congregations who need it most. This central budget plan promotes the effective use of money and avoids the encumbrances of bank loans. A lump-sum disbursement of funds sufficient for a congregation to build or take possession of a building whenever they so desire ensures that enthusiastic evangelistic crusades need not be interrupted by fund-raising. In this way, the morale of the local congregation remains high, and regional mother-churches remain unhampered in their church planting efforts. As the lovela-matriz multiplies congregations, the denominational leadership freely allocates money for development.

Another unique feature of the Congregação Cristã is the degree to which it has adapted the Biblical model of 'the priesthood of all believers' (I Peter 2. 5,9). Distinctions between clergy and laity are almost obliterated. There are no bishops or pastors, only elders and deacons. During extensive prayer sessions at yearly conferences, elders and deacons are chosen to lead specific constituencies. Those individuals selected are then ordained by the laity, to positions which are unsalaried, and for life. The number of leaders chosen each year varies to correspond to the growth of the church. The most senior elder automatically becomes president at the yearly meeting.

- 19 In the 1960s, crowds sometimes numbered more than 200,000. In this decade, Melo received an annual average of 300,000 letters from all over Brazil. See Wilson H. Endruweit, 'Pentecostalism in Brazil: A Historical and Theological Study of its Characteristics' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Northwestern University, 1975), p. 39; William R. Read, Fermento Religioso nas Massas do Brasil (São Paulo, 1967), p. 145.
- 20 Read, Fermento Religioso, p. 154.
- 21 Endruweit, p. 43.
- 22 John N. Vaughan, The World's 20 Largest Churches (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1986), p. 259.
- 23 Barrett, p. 195; Endruweit, p. 89.
- 24 Barrett, p. 195.
- 25 Interviews with William Mercer, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste (Espinho, Recife), 12 June 1985; Amaro Gomes, Pastor, Assembléia de Deus (Gamileira, Pernambuco), 12 June 1985; 'Pastor Robson', Assembléia de Deus (Abreu e Lima, Pernambuco), 12 June 1985; Nelson Monteiro, Pastor, Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil (João Pessoa, Paraíba), 29 June 1985; Josef Östby, Director, 'Bibeln Till Alla' (Vällingby, Sweden), 1 May 1989.

V: SPIRITUAL SCULPTRESSES:  
AN HISTORICAL EXAMINATION OF THE UNIQUE CONTRIBUTIONS OF WOMEN TO  
THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN NORTHEASTERN BRAZIL

In neither Emilio Conde's official history of the Assembléias de Deus in Brazil (1960), nor in Abraão de Almeida's revision and expansion of Conde's work (1982), is there a section specifically devoted to recounting the biographies of notable women in the denomination. In fact, though scholarly works have documented some aspects of the growth of Pentecostalism in Brazil (Read, 1965; 1973; Willems, 1967; Read, Johnson and Monterosso, 1969; Hollenweger, 1972; Endruweit, 1975; Hoffnagel, 1978), no attempt has previously been made to research the component of female participation in the establishment and development of the movement. This is a serious omission. Indeed, research clearly indicates that the immediate inclusion of women into the ranks of leadership in local congregations was crucial to both the early survival of the movement and to its subsequent growth. Today, the continued active participation of women in the church has helped to structure the present formation of Brazil's largest Protestant denomination.

A. Celina Martins de Albuquerque: The First Brazilian Pentecostal

Celina Martins was born in Manaus in 1874, and at age fifteen married a river-boat pilot and marine navigator from Amazônia, Henrique Albuquerque. The couple moved to Belém, where, later, they converted to an evangelical religious faith. Celina Martins de Albuquerque was a member of the Baptist congregation in Belém which

hosted missionaries Gunnar Vingren and Daniel Berg upon their arrival in Brazil in 1911. Like many other church members, Celina participated in the prayer meetings conducted by the two Swedes for those stricken by an epidemic of yellow fever which raged through the Amazon port. During the prayer meetings, Celina was an eyewitness to miraculous healings and other supernatural encounters. She became desirous of personally experiencing Pentecostal phenomena.

When the yellow fever epidemic had passed, Vingren and Berg discovered to their amazement and joy that the band of intercessors who had faithfully prayed for the sick were keen for new spiritual challenges. Eagerly, Vingren and Berg began to teach and preach about the Pentecostal experience. Since the men had repeatedly declared the Holy Spirit to be the power source behind the miraculous acts of healing which the Belém church had witnessed, encouraging further devotion to the Holy Spirit seemed a logical and necessary progression in the maturation of the Baptist believers. The missionaries continued conducting daily prayer meetings, but the sessions took on a new emphasis. Instead of offering prayer only on behalf of the sick, intercessors began to pray for their own personal spiritual concerns. Prayer sessions became 'tarrying meetings', where individuals 'waited' upon God, seeking for an individual encounter with the Holy Spirit. Celina and a select few voluntarily pledged themselves to an intensive programme of prayer.

In his personal diary, Gunnar Vingren testified to Celina's determined pursuit of greater spiritual experience and her successful attainment of it: 'On Thursday after the prayer meeting I was



officially concluded, she continued to pray...Early in the morning, Celina received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit with speaking in tongues. She spoke in tongues for two hours...'1 At 1 a.m. on June 8, 1911, Celina de Albuquerque became 'the first Brazilian Pentecostal'.<sup>2</sup>

This dramatic supernatural encounter radically changed Celina's life. She became, albeit reluctantly, a noted public figure in Belém. Lauded by some and a target of persecution by others, Celina did her best to support both the structured programmes of the Baptist church and the informal prayer gatherings of the Swedish missionaries. However, her divided loyalties soon jeopardized her long-standing position as a Sunday School teacher in the established church. Increasingly alarmed at the consequences of permitting Vingren and Berg to teach and hold meetings in the premises of his church, the Baptist pastor dismissed Celina from her teaching post, hoping to stem the tide of religious fanaticism awash in the congregation. Eventually, after a series of disagreements with the Baptist pastor, Celina and others who had experienced 'The Baptism' were disfellowshipped from the church. In response to the denominational officials who said that the missionaries were sowing seeds of doubt and disunity in the minds of parishoners, Daniel Berg gave a singular retort: 'If only everyone had the Pentecostal experience, we would never be divided!'<sup>3</sup>

After their expulsion from the Baptist congregation, Celina and Henrique Albuquerque offered the use of their home as the first house church of the Assembleia de Deus in Belém. Not only was Celina a

spiritual 'mother' to others in the fledgling denomination, she was also virtually a part-time church administrator and pastor, since of all the founding members of the congregation, she was one of the few who remained in perpetual residence in Belém. Following the period of initial adjustment and incorporation of Pentecostalism in Pará (1911-1914), Belém church leaders were often absent from the congregation. Gunnar Vingren, Climaco Bueno Aza and Adriano Nobre made numerous journeys to distant regions of Pará and Amapá in order to conduct evangelistic crusades or to disciple groups of new converts. Daniel Berg was gone for weeks at a time, selling Bibles along the Amazon and into the interior of the Northern states. Almost by default, the Assembléia was increasingly entrusted into Celina's care. Celina remained at home, giving her entire attention to the church while her husband was navigating onboard ships heading upriver to Manaus. Furthermore, since Henrique's job already required constant travel and many days' absence from home, it was impractical for he and Celina to become involved in extensive missionary journeys themselves. In light of these circumstances, Celina had little opportunity or reason to leave Belém. She remained an integral part of the Assembléia for over fifty years, providing continuity and stability for a maturing national movement.

Throughout her lifetime, Celina Martins de Albuquerque was a featured speaker at conferences, being called upon to recount her initial tongues-speaking experience and the beginning of Pentecostalism in Brazil. In Belém in 1936, she addressed the General Conference of the Assembléia de Deus, on the twenty-fifth anniversary

of the founding of the movement.<sup>4</sup> Even in her later years, Celina continued to be a sought-after guest for special events and celebrations. Her last public address was delivered by proxy, to the Assembleia de Deus in Manaus on the occasion of its golden anniversary in October 1967. At 93 years of age, Celina was personally unable to make the trip from Belém back to her birthplace. Instead, her handwritten message was read to the crowd by the presiding pastor.

Recalling the days when Manaus had no Pentecostal presence, Celina chronicled how communities of Assembleia de Deus believers had been planted throughout the remote regions of Pará and Amazônia during the years of her lifetime. She congratulated the more than one thousand members of the Manaus Assembleia on reaching the milestone of its first half century as a congregation.<sup>5</sup>

Celina Martins de Albuquerque died at age 95, on March 27, 1969, in Belém do Pará. She was eulogized by the Belém Assembleia as 'a fiel anciã', 'the faithful, venerable elder'.<sup>6</sup>

#### B. 'Sisters' in the Sertão: Itinerant Preachers and Teachers in the Backlands

'Evangelistas voluntárias' is the honorary title which Brazilian Pentecostals apply to those women who are active in their church assembly, and who feel a personal responsibility to do volunteer work which will help establish and promote the growth of the movement. They are lay ministers, who, in addition to caring for their own households, spend much of their time evangelizing women, catechizing children, and visiting the sick on behalf of their local congregation.

Pregadoras voluntárias is the name accorded those women who travel in evangelistic work, often taking leaves of absence from their families or regular church congregations, in order to engage in speaking tours to unevangelized regions of the Northeast. In the history of Brazilian Pentecostalism, the aforementioned titles find their first use in reference to female preachers and teachers who came to prominence through the Assembleia in Belém.

1. Maria de Nazaré: Pentecostal Catalyst in Pará and Ceará

A founding member of the Belém Pentecostal congregation and a close friend of Celina de Albuquerque, Maria de Nazaré can lay claim to being both the first evangelista and the first pregadora of the Brazilian Pentecostal movement. As an evangelista, Maria worked tirelessly in devotion to her home assembly. As a pregadora, she was an itinerant preacher who boldly and courageously proclaimed the Pentecostal message in the face of rejection and persecution.

While Celina de Albuquerque contributed to the growth of the new congregation by permitting her home to be used as a house church and by serving as a surrogate pastor, Maria de Nazaré early came to special notice in the burgeoning congregation by virtue of her interpersonal skills. Through her outgoing and enthusiastic personality, she was able not only to confront critics of the movement, she actually persuaded many individuals who were initially hostile to the sect to overcome their objections and hesitations and adopt Pentecostal belief for themselves. Throughout the history of the Assembleia, scattered vignettes involving Maria de Nazaré all point to the fact that she was the evangelistic sparkplug of the Belém

congregation. While the male heads of the movement were on extended preaching tours throughout the Northeast, Maria remained in the city and continued in aggressive evangelistic efforts there, badgering friends and former cohorts from the Baptist Church to join the Pentecostal cause.<sup>7</sup>

By all accounts, Maria was a demonstrative, theatrical woman who savoured the challenge of speaking publicly about her Pentecostal convictions. That she enjoyed being the center of attention, especially when delivering startling and unexpected pronouncements of any sort, is readily seen in her actions following the occurrence of Celina de Albuquerque's baptism in the Holy Spirit. As part of the group from the Belém Baptist church which had covenanted together to seek for the Pentecostal experience, Maria had been present during the prayer meeting when Celina first spoke in tongues. However, only a few hours after the prayer gathering, before Celina herself could report on the manner of her Holy Spirit Baptism, Maria rushed to carry the news of the incident to members of the prayer group who had been absent:

As soon as it was dawn, Sister Nazaré hastened to the home of José Batista de Carvalho...bringing with her the good news that Sister Celina had received the promise, in accordance with the Word of God. In the home of José Batista, there were various people, among them Manoel Maria Rodrigues, deacon of the Baptist Church. He later declared 'it was in this moment [of hearing Maria de Nazaré's testimony] that I...believed in the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup>

Experiencing for herself the Baptism in the Holy Spirit just a day following Celina's breakthrough, Maria soon became a spiritual leader in the church in Belém. She was given to seeing visions and making prophetic pronouncements in the church congregation. On

occasion, she 'sang in the Spirit', bringing heavenly messages to the congregation while singing in tongues, then reprising the melody with simultaneous translation into Portuguese.<sup>9</sup> Most notably, however, Maria worked tirelessly in evangelistic campaigns.

In 1914, this 'humble woman whose heart was burning with zeal for the cause of God' travelled four days by boat from Belém and afterward by foot, to reach São Francisco in the Serra de Uruburetama of Ceará, in order to present the Pentecostal message to her parents. The journey was initially a disappointment, for in spite of her earnest pleas, Maria's parents rejected all evangelistic advances. Determined that her mission to the sertão would not end without a conquest of some kind, Maria turned her attention to proselytizing members of an independent Presbyterian congregation which had been established in the locale some years earlier. When Maria recounted to the Presbyterians what had happened in Belém, and how she herself had experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, the entire congregation decided to embrace Pentecostalism. This church became the first Assembléia de Deus in Ceará. Vicente Sales Batos, one of the Presbyterian elders converted under the ministry of Maria de Nazaré, went on to become the first ordained Pentecostal minister in the state.<sup>10</sup>

After her success in evangelizing the Presbyterian congregation, Maria eagerly sought other opportunities to spread the Pentecostal message. She was loathe to leave Ceará until she had established at least one other congregation. With typical determination and flair, she accomplished her goal, at Fazenda Lagoinha. The owner of the fazenda and his workers all accepted the convincing testimony of

'Sister Nazaré'. Maria returned to Belém, and reported to the church leadership of her success in missionizing among the Cearanese backlanders. The mother church in Belém hastily dispatched Adriano Nobre, himself a former Presbyterianism, to Uruburetama to disciple the new Pentecostal believers there. When Nobre arrived in São Francisco, he found congregations of seventy and thirty members, respectively. The churches established under the direction of Maria de Nazaré were not only persevering in the faith, they were daily adding to their numbers.

In spite of steadily increasing numbers, the growth of the churches in the Serra de Uruburetama was not easily gained. The fazenda owner's brother bribed the local delegado to have Nobre and some key Pentecostal leaders arrested. Only through the intervention of the regional judge was the arrest order recinded. In the face of persecution, it might have been expected that the new converts would weaken. However, the opposite proved true; the congregations strengthened their hold in major sectors of the community. At Fazenda Lagoinha, during the first evangelistic crusade conducted after Adriano Nobre's arrival, a further two hundred converts joined the Assembléia. Many of these individuals were also baptized in the Holy Spirit.<sup>11</sup> A genuine atmosphere of spiritual revival was underway in the Cearense backlands. In subsequent years, the work in São Francisco de Uruburetama was considered to be of such significance to the expansion of the Pentecostal movement that Gunnar Vingren personally visited the congregations there. Later, Swedish missionary

Otto Nelson was deployed to launch evangelistic campaigns to other Cearanese municípios from the base of São Francisco.

Maria de Nazaré's success in the early establishment of twin congregations in the Northeastern sertão--especially after she had been rebuffed in her initial attempt at missionizing among her family --was a triumph of perseverance over discouragement, and a vital step in the continued growth of Pentecostalism as a national movement. Without Maria's resolve to extend the movement eastward, Pentecostalism could easily have become entrenched as a regional movement, tied to Pará and Amazonas. Until Maria's inaugural visit to the Cearanese backlands, the itineration of Assembleia evangelists had been largely defined along a northwesterly route paralleling the flow of the Amazon. The early pioneers had chosen to evangelize in locales which had relatively open access, that is, to the Ilha de Marajó and Ilha dos Macacos at the mouth of the Amazon near Belém, to Macapá and the Amapá territory, to settlements upriver towards Manaus, and to various towns and cities along Amazon tributaries. With Maria de Nazaré's church planting campaign, a new momentum was achieved, enabling Pentecostalism to spread with the continuously shifting population of the sertão. As the backlanders moved from region to region overlapping the borders of the Northeastern states, the message of Pentecostalism fanned toward the major population centers of Natal, João Pessoa, Recife, Maceló and Salvador.

That Pentecostal evangelists understood the crucial migratory flow from the sertão to the population centers of the eastern seaboard and the necessity of capitalizing upon the Cearanese backlanders'



curiosity about Pentecostalism before the effects of Maria de Nazaré's preaching tour had dissipated is evidenced in the actions of Adriano Nobre. Following his sojourn in São Francisco de Uruburetama, Nobre deliberately turned away from the northern coast, and headed southeast. In spite of what to some may have seemed the 'obvious' strategy of establishing a church in nearby Fortaleza and thereby consolidating Pentecostal power in the state of Ceará, Nobre temporarily disregarded Fortaleza (important in its own right but isolated on the northern coastline), in favour of travelling through the Cearanese sertão directly to the hub of the Northeast, Recife. Nobre campaigned in the port as early as 1916. Later, from the newly-established Pernambuco lorea matriz, Pentecostalism spread up and down the Gold Coast. Eventually, Assembléia evangelists did backtrack to northern Ceará, but it was not until 1922 that a permanent Pentecostal congregation was established in the state capital. Some six years after the establishment of the church in Recife and eight years after the first Cearanese Pentecostal churches were already thriving in the interior of the state, the Assembléias finally founded a work in Fortaleza.

## 2. Raimunda Aragão: Opening the Interior of Maranhão

Raimunda Aragão came to prominence as a Pentecostal pregadora voluntária in Maranhão during the 1920s. Just as Maria de Nazaré had abandoned her roots in the rural Northeast in favour of migrating to a coastal urban center where she then encountered Pentecostalism, so Raimunda's conversion was the result of her contact with Pentecostal believers in the seaport of São Luís, subsequent to her move from the interior of Maranhão. Also in a fashion similar to Maria de Nazaré,

Raimunda undertook an evangelistic mission into the Northeastern backlands, due to earnest concern that members of her immediate family be given the chance to hear and respond to the message of evangelical Christianity.

However, parallels between the lives of the two women end here. Whereas Maria de Nazaré's family rejected her evangelistic appeals, Raimunda's relatives eagerly adopted Pentecostal belief. This factor altered the succeeding path Raimunda would take. Rather than attempting to establish an evangelistic base forged from the reformation of an established denominational church as Maria had done, Raimunda launched a Pentecostal offensive on the Northeastern *sertão* right from her family home in Iraça. Relatives who had been the first Pentecostal converts in the community became the early leaders of the local congregation. Eventually, a loose network of small rural *Assembléias* was formed through the coordinated efforts of many congregados who contacted and missionized their acquaintances in the Maranhense backlands. Until Raimunda took up the challenge of evangelizing in the interior, the extent of the Pentecostal presence in the state had been limited to the *Assembléia de Deus* mother-church in São Luis. Raimunda's sojourn in Iraça was instrumental in preparing the soil of a new and fertile territory for the planting and growth of Pentecostalism. A tried and workable plan facilitating the penetration of the evangelical message to all regions of the state was in place.

### 3. Joaquina de Souza Carvalho: Evangelist to Bahia

As in Ceará, a female evangelist was first to bring the message of Pentecostalism to the inhabitants of Bahia. Joaquina de Souza Carvalho was the initiator of the first Pentecostal meetings in the state, held in the city of Canavieiras, in 1926.

Copying what was, by then, a familiar format of establishing new Assembléia works in a hostile or unknown environment, Souza Carvalho approached the existing evangelical church in the city (on this occasion a Baptist congregation) and, with the permission of the pastor, began to teach a curious and responsive congregation about the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. Without hesitation, the church converted to Pentecostalism. As in towns in the North and Northeast where denominational churches had renounced their prior affiliations in favour of joining the Assembléias de Deus, the emergence of local leadership was encouraged and supported. In Canavieiras, former Baptist deacon Teodoro Santana took over direction of the local congregation, and eventually became the first ordained Pentecostal minister in the state. Pastor Santana remained as director of the Canavieiras church for more than thirty years. In light of the longevity of Teodoro Santana's service and the unwavering commitment of the Canavieiras Pentecostal congregation down through the years, Joaquina de Souza Carvalho's efforts in evangelism were of genuine and lasting significance to Pentecostal Church growth in the Northeast.

### 4. Maria José de Melo: Pregadora Voluntária in Maranhão

In 1933, Maria José de Melo joined the growing ranks of female preachers in the Northeastern interior. A convert from the Igreja

Batista Livre, de Melo began preaching among the townspeople of Dom Pedro, her Maranhense hometown, immediately following her conversion. She gathered a small group of believers, and began to lead them in Bible studies. The study group grew so rapidly, that de Melo began to petition the Assembléia de Deus in São Luis to dispatch a full-time pastor-evangelist to Dom Pedro, to assist in the formation of a church. Joao Jonas, an immigrant from Hungary who was the first ordained Assembléia minister in Maranhão, came to work with the young but eager congregation.

The Assembléia in Dom Pedro began to grow rapidly, under the joint leadership of de Melo and Jonas. On more than one occasion, the number of new converts in a single service exceeded forty people, and many denominationalists were baptized with the Holy Spirit. The assembly initiated evangelistic meetings in neighbouring towns, and soon there were branch works in the municipalities of Codó, Caxias, Colinas and Barra de Corda. In Colinas, the entire congregation of the Igreja Batista Livre converted en masse, and was directly admitted to membership in the Assembléia de Deus.<sup>12</sup> Jonas and his team of auxiliaries were responsible to oversee fifteen churches and their many daughter congregations in twelve municipalities spread over a distance of six-hundred kilometres. Jonas travelled the oversized parish on horseback where and when possible, and on foot, when necessary.

In the decades subsequent to its founding, the church of Dom Pedro has continued to play an important role in the growth of Pentecostalism, in areas far removed from the Maranhense sertão.



Plate 5: A Church of the Northeastern Interior. (Reproduced with permission from an original photograph by Harold Matson.)



Plate 6: Pregadoras Voluntarias: Women evangelists in the Recifense working-class neighbourhoods. (Ibid.)

During the very first evangelistic service held in Dom Pedro after Jonas' arrival in 1933, three persons responded to the call for conversion. One of the three new converts, Alcibíades Vasconcelos, went on to become a laypreacher and then a full-fledged minister. For a time, he pastored the Dom Pedro congregation, then later was appointed to pastorates in São Luis and in Rio de Janeiro. The rural Northeastern church considers that it has extended its own ministry through the exploits of his life.

##### 5. Pregadoras Voluntárias and Beatas: Comparisons and Contrasts

To casual observers, it may be difficult to readily assess the historical uniqueness of the Pentecostal pregadoras voluntárias. It could be assumed that these women were simply Pentecostal beatas, wandering the backlands, preaching a Protestant brand of religious mysticism. However, nothing could be further from the truth. While both pregadoras and beatas have left a marked impact upon the population of the Northeast by virtue of their presence in the sertão, the kind of response occasioned by each group relates to the differing social and religious backgrounds which typify their makeup. Pregadoras and beatas vary in purpose, intent, and lifestyle.

Typically, beatas are women who have committed themselves to a life-long religious vocation as nuns or spiritist practitioners. Like their male counterparts (beatos), they tend to proliferate only in the sertão. This is not surprising, in light of the Catholic Church's chronic difficulty in recruiting priests for the Brazilian backlands and the critical shortage of actual numbers of priests and nuns who

are resident in the region.<sup>13</sup> Beatas help fill a socio-religious 'gap' left vacant by absent clerics.

Most beatas are single, and many live as celibates. As such, beatas tend to be already marginalized persons, women who have lived on the fringes of society long before they receive acclaim as venerable religious figures. Beatas gain their title from others who, over time, come to identify unusual capacities for spiritual insight or ability in these women. Often, beatas gain their honoured position due to unexplainable spiritual phenomena which are 'channelled' through them. In many instances, the identification of a beata has resulted from the reputed occurrence of a miracle, in which elements of both Catholic practice and folk religious belief have been syncretized. In much the same way that Catholics honour dead saints, a beata is often venerated in her own right, as a living repository of godly grace. Though male beatos often pursue a nomadic and solitary existence, most beatas are more sedentary, and are frequently long-time residents in a chosen locale. Sometimes, a beata will even have a place name incorporated into the title by which she is known, so that her identity is not confused with another woman of the same name.

One of the best known beatas of the Northeast was Maria de Araújo (1861-1914), a woman whose name has become indelibly linked with the Cearanese sertão community of Joazeiro do Norte. Araújo is an apt example of a beata. Insofar as she was a sertanejo who was pious, but uneducated. That Araújo was a socially-marginalized woman is reflected in her racial and class background, as well as in her marital status. A mulata laundress, she was an unmarried twenty-eight

year old, serving in the household of Padre Cícero at the time of the 1889 Cearanese drought. After participating in an all-night prayer vigil aimed at imploring divine respite from drought and famine, Araújo fell into a trance when she received the eucharist from Padre Cícero in an early morning mass on March 1, 1889. Part of the host, red with blood, fell from her mouth. The extraordinary event of the apparent transformation of host to blood was repeated every Wednesday and Friday until the end of the Lenten season. Sertanejos by the hundreds began making pilgrimages to Joazeiro. The rector of the nearby Crato seminary, having declared that the blood stains from Araújo's mouth left on the altar linens of the Joazeiro church were in reality the very blood of Christ, led a pilgrimage of three thousand people to the village on July 7, 1889. Maria de Araújo rapidly became the subject of intense veneration. Although Padre Cícero himself was skeptical of the alleged 'Miracle of Joazeiro' (noting that the beata had a history of epilepsy, which accounted for her apparent trances), he did not forbid the actual adulation of Araújo.

Araújo gained considerable real and symbolic influence in Northeastern folk religion. She boasted that the divine purpose behind the miraculous transformation of her communion wafer was to demonstrate to the world that Christ had chosen Joazeiro as the centre from which he would convert sinners and save mankind. Even after she died, Maria de Araújo remained a potent force in Northeastern spirituality. Her body was placed in a sepulchre in a chapel in Joazeiro, and this site became a focal point of devout veneration and special pilgrimage. By 1933, an airfield had to be constructed at Joazeiro, to accommodate



the growth of the city and the continuing influx of pilgrims. However, since church authorities felt that devotion to the beata had become quasi-fanatical, Araújo's sepulchre was demolished, after the death of Padre Cícero in 1934.<sup>14</sup>

Maria de Araújo typifies beatas in that she was pious but mystical, uneducated, single, and sedentary. In contrast, the various aforementioned pregadoras illustrate that Pentecostal female clerics were most often married, mobile (during the tenure of their religious service), and members of mainstream society. Also, the pregadoras were proclamation-oriented, concentrating their ministry upon those factors that would and could challenge the existing Northeastern realidade, rather than relying upon a silent, mystical witness which merely re-interpreted that reality. Pregadoras were like their Catholic counterparts in having few opportunities to achieve a high level of education. However, Pentecostals were normally well-schooled in Bible doctrine before they commenced their spiritual service.

Pentecostal pregadoras were--and are--unique. During the last half-century, they have established a distinct profile for their religious role in the sertão. As opposed to beatas, who gradually earn their religious title, pregadoras are normally accorded the title of 'voluntary preacher' immediately at the outset of their ministry. The title is assigned to a woman by the sending congregation to whom she is responsible. Her title is then suspended or revoked only if she fails to carry out her assigned duties. The fact that Pentecostal pregadoras are often wives and mothers also influences their non-traditional stance toward ministry obligations. In contrast to their

Catholic counterparts, pregadoras regard their religious service to be a time-bounded commitment, a temporary but intense fulfillment of religious vows. Pregadoras tend to view their spiritual calling in relation to the completion of a specific task or series of tasks requiring only minimal disruption of family life and short absences from home. Once their religious service has been fulfilled, pregadoras return to their regular domestic life. Though they periodically may missionize in distant territory virgin to the message of Pentecostalism, pregadoras have no intent to permanently change their residence or leave their former life. Neither do pregadoras evangelize in order to alleviate an imbalance in the religious sphere, due to a lack of male Pentecostal ministers.<sup>15</sup>

Pregadoras further establish their distinct identity by rejecting the doctrines and practices followed by beatas. Assembléia adherents contend that when beatas accept adulation for the accomplishment of a measure of spiritual devotion, they accept homage which is rightfully reserved for God alone. Pentecostals judge that the receiving of such personal veneration is sin. As well, pregadoras work hard to establish a clear distinction between their behaviour and that of beatas, distancing themselves from any practice which reflects elements of Animism or folk Catholicism. For example, pregadoras refuse to link their ministerial work to tangible symbols of any kind. Heshing miracle and ministry by means of symbolism has been a practice characteristic of many beatas, as with Maria de Araújo, who is indelibly linked with the symbol of the communion host. Some beatas have incited adoration of a particular shrine or reliquary. Others

have intentionally grown their hair long, so that they could braid it and then cut it off, in a votive offering to Christ, Mary or the saints. Pregadoras, however, decry this transferring of respect from God to inanimate objects as a form of idolatry.

Perhaps it is because the pregadora already has the backing of an institution that gives her a place of prominence and a voice in its decision-making affairs that forestalls any feeling of needing to seek for increased personal recognition through identification with material symbols. In contrast, females in the Roman Church have traditionally been kept on the sidelines in matters pertaining to church politics and polity. It is understandable, therefore, that Catholic women have occasionally gone to extraordinary lengths to link their identity with a sacramental symbol, in order to insure that their spiritual service is not overlooked, in the enormity of the religious institution they have sought to serve.

All told, Pentecostal evangelistas and pregadoras have been key components in the matrix of the Northeastern Church. Female lay workers fill an important leadership and functionary role, bridging the middle ground between the full-time ministry of pastors and the occasional volunteer work of congregados.

One woman in the early history of Brazilian Pentecostalism who never undertook major evangelistic tours into the interior but who was nevertheless a preacher and teacher of note, was Frida Vingren. Though she never travelled extensively, her words spread the length and breadth of the Northeast. Through the dissemination of her writings, Vingren was perhaps the most eloquent of all pregadoras voluntárias.

G. Frida Strandberg Vingren: Theology in '44' Time

Frida Strandberg Vingren was the wife of Pentecostal pioneer Gunnar Vingren. She was a nurse by profession, but functioned in a wide variety of challenging roles during her years of missionary work in Brazil. Gunnar and Frida were equal partners in ministry, and developed a working relationship that divided pastoral and evangelistic responsibilities between them.

Although Gunnar was known to be an excellent speaker, and therefore received most of the accolades for their joint ministry, it can be argued that it was Frida's contributions to the formation of the Northeastern Church that have had the most enduring effect. If Gunnar was the 'John Wesley' of Brazilian Pentecostalism, then Frida was unquestionably its 'Charles Wesley', for Frida complemented her husband's public preaching by composing numerous Portuguese-language songs, and writing or translating material which was printed for use in Pentecostal indoctrination classes. Under her creative inspiration, a Brazilian Pentecostal hymnology was developed. Music became the means whereby congregations in every corner of the Northeast were linked together, through a common catechism of faith. So, while Gunnar promoted quantitative Church growth by winning converts through his dynamism as a public preacher, the infant Pentecostal movement was strengthened and enriched in qualitative growth by the proliferation of lyrical poems which flowed from his wife's pen. Gunnar was one of Brazil's premier Pentecostal preachers, but Frida was, in essence, the movement's theologian.

### 1. Frida's Story: A Prophecy Fulfilled

The story of Frida Strandberg Vingren is one which combines elements of personal courage, determination, and romantic adventure. Frida had been a part of Gunnar's life, long before they even knew each other. The same summer day in 1910 when Olaf Ullidin had prophesied to Gunnar that he would someday preach in a place called 'Pará', he had also declared that Vingren would marry a woman called Strandberg. The prediction of a forthcoming marriage had intrigued Vingren, though at the time he had no idea how the prophecy could be fulfilled.

Five years later, after Pentecostalism had taken firm root in Brazilian soil, Vingren and Berg decided that Gunnar would return to Sweden in order to report to friends, relatives and church supporters how the mission to Pará was faring. Gunnar Vingren left Belém for Scandinavia on August 1, 1915, and arrived in the Norwegian port of Kristiansand on December 20. For the next fifteen months, he visited friends and relatives, and undertook a preaching itinerary of the Swedish Pentecostal churches. In none of the rounds of his familial or pastoral visits did Gunnar encounter a potential spouse, nor did he meet an unmarried woman by the name of Strandberg. When his ministerial obligations were completed, Vingren booked his return passage to New York and Belém. The week prior to his embarkation, the renowned Philadelphia church in Stockholm held a farewell service in his honour. During the service, Pastor Lewi Pethrus took Gunnar aside and asked him if he would have a private word with a young woman in the congregation who had, sometime previously, expressed her desire to

enter full-time medical missionary work in Brazil. Could Gunnar speak to her and give her some advice on preparing for missionary service? Gunnar sought out the young woman and introduced himself. Then she gave her name: Frida Strandberg.

In the days of the ensuing week before his departure, Gunnar and Frida spent time together in conversation and prayer, talking of marriage and of ministry in Brazil. The couple attended meetings in the home of Lewi Pethrus, where Frida received the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. It was agreed that since Gunnar's ocean passage was already booked, he would sail to New York and wait for Frida to join him there. On March 12, 1917, Gunnar headed for the Norwegian ports. He arrived in New York on May 20, with Frida following, on June 12. Though Frida easily obtained a visa for travel to Brazil, Gunnar's documents were not returned in time for him to accompany her on the next sailing to Belém.<sup>16</sup> Since their budget could ill afford a lengthy lay-over for either of them, Frida was forced to travel to Brazil on her own. Frida had known Gunnar for only a matter of days before their engagement; now, after only a few more days with him, she was journeying alone to South America, with no guarantee other than his personal word that he would follow as soon as he could, and that he would honour his pledge to marry her.

To continue alone on the journey to Belém tested Frida's physical and emotional mettle. She was placed as a fourth person in a ship's cabin built for three, sharing the room with a trio of Spanish-speaking women who were travelling with a circus troupe. Passage through the Caribbean was rough, and on one occasion during a severe

storm--her cabin door having been left ajar by one of the circus performers--Frida had to fight back waves that washed right into her sleeping berth. When the liner finally arrived in Belém, it was night, and a thunder and lightning storm was raging. Frida was having second thoughts about her decision to pursue a missionary vocation, when Adriano Nobre (the harbour master who had also befriended Vingren and Berg upon their first arrival in port, and now was a deacon of the Belém Assembléia) appeared, uttering a hearty English 'Hello!'. Since the telegram from Gunnar Vingren notifying the Belém church of the arrival of his fiancée had been sent from New York, Nobre had assumed that the woman would be an American. Nobre and Daniel Berg were delighted to discover that Gunnar's future wife not only was Swedish, she was the express fulfillment of Uldin's prophecy of 1910!17

On August 6, 1917, after a total absence of just over two years since his departure from Brazil, Gunnar Vingren arrived back in Belém. Two months later, on October 16, Gunnar and Frida were married. They lived and ministered in the Northern and Northeastern states for the next sixteen years. Throughout this time, Frida was a mainstay in the development of the growing Pentecostal movement. She was devoted to the Belém Assembléia, spending hours together with the women of the church, joining them in days of prayer and fasting. In 1919, a great move of the Holy Spirit in the Belém congregation was attributed to Frida's perseverance in prayer. While some women grew weary in prayer, and others even completely gave up praying for a divine visitation, Frida continued firm in intercession, until finally, more than seventy persons were baptized in the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues.18

Frida also learned to endure hardship alongside the women of the North and Northeast. By choosing to live as a working-class wife in a working-class neighbourhood, Frida maintained a simple lifestyle. Consequently, she was unable to fully protect herself or her family members from the rigours of the Brazilian semi-tropics. In 1920, Frida contracted malaria. During her two and a half month bout with the disease, she nearly died.<sup>19</sup> In a separate incident, tragedy struck Frida's household, when the Vingren's daughter, Gunvor, died. Frida and Gunnar had to bury their daughter in Brazil, with the added sorrow of knowing that her grandparents and other relatives in Sweden had never seen or known her.<sup>20</sup>

Through the personal struggles she endured, Frida earned the respect of the women of her adopted country. Over the years, she came to understand and truly empathize with the hurts and hearts of Brasileiras. The lyrics of many of her hymns are strongly emotive, and often refer to the joy of putting off the pain of this world, and being with Christ and loved ones in heaven. Perhaps, the far-reaching effects of Frida's ministry can be accounted for, in part, by the inclusion of the Brazilian themes of suffering and sacrificial love within the family as topics in her hymns.

## 2. Poet and theologian

Frida's commitment and determination to be a contributing member of the Belém Assembléia and a successful minister in her own right, apart from her husband, is seen in the fact that she disciplined herself to begin learning the Portuguese language immediately upon her arrival in Brazil. That she learned quickly and learned well is



evidenced by the fact that she was soon able to do written translation work, and then began to write hymns. The difficulty of writing poetry in a foreign language was compounded by the attempt to convey weighty theological ideas in rhyming couplets; yet, in spite of these inhibiting factors, Frida was prolific in her production of hymns and choruses for use in the local congregation.

Over time, Frida's works became well-known and widely-used. In 1921, four years after Frida's arrival in Belém, the Assembléia de Deus published Cantor Pentecostal, the first printing of a standardized hymnal for the growing movement. The book contained forty-four hymns and ten choruses, many of them Frida's. The following year, a committee in Recife published a second hymnal, Harpa Cristã. This book contained one-hundred hymns, and preempted Cantor Pentecostal as the official songbook of the Assembléias. There have been five subsequent editions of Harpa Cristã published since 1922. While each edition has been revised and the number of compositions has grown commensurate to the development of Pentecostal hymnology, a core of Frida's songs has always been preserved in each volume. In the present edition of 524 hymns and choruses, no less than forty-one Vingren hymns have been retained.

Frida's verses are typified by language that is clear and direct. The music which accompanies her poems and transforms them into hymns frequently came from popular tunes which were already well-known at the time when Frida was preparing her poetic compositions. Often, Frida wrote new words to the melodies of hymns used in denominational churches, or she borrowed the tunes of Brazilian or European folksongs

as backdrops for her work. This was done intentionally, as a way of making memorable the message contained in each of her songs. Considering that the culture of the Northern and Northeastern working-class was (and still is) largely oriented around oral poetry and music, Frida's hymnwriting proved to be an effective strategy for assisting evangelistic efforts and nurturing new converts.

The topics of Frida's compositions were considerable and varied. As a religious poet, Frida could delve into a plethora of theological subjects for her hymnwriting. Some of her early works were biographical ballads recounting the lifestories of notable Bible characters. Others were mini-catechisms, instructing believers in the fundamentals of the faith:

Salvo estou, Jesus comprou-me	I am saved, Jesus bought me
Do pecado e perdição	from sin and perdition
Com Seu 'spirito ja selou-me	With His spirit he sealed me
Deu-me paz no coração.	Gave me peace in my heart.

Glória, glória, aleluia	Glory, glory, alleluia
Ja achei a salvação	I have found salvation
Glória, glória, aleluia	Glory, glory, alleluia
Cristo deu-me redenção. <sup>21</sup>	Christ gave me redemption.

Many of Frida's compositions emphasize the personal nature of salvation. Possibly, this aspect of her writing was honed to serve as a subtle weapon directed against Catholics and denominational Protestants, groups whose doctrines portray a broader tradition-oriented view of salvation, and place less emphasis than Pentecostalism upon the necessity of making a conscious choice to repent of individual sin in order to achieve religious regeneration. As a working-class female theologian, Frida strove to let her constituency know--clearly and absolutely--that Pentecostal

Christianity could challenge and change the harsh realidade of life. Whereas Catholicism and denominationalism were often seen to support the political and social status quo, Vingren depicted Pentecostalism as a religion which was revolutionary, especially in the realm of the individual and the family. Repetitious messages in Frida's verses are "Christ died for me", "I believe", "I have salvation", "My Jesus, I love you", and "Jesus is mine". The vicarious nature of Christ's death—that He died not for the world in general, but for the world as an enumeration of specific individuals—is repeatedly stressed:

Cristo Jesus lá na cruz já sofreu Em meu lugar, em meu lugar; Tudo por mim Ele ali padeceu, Para a minh'alma salvar.	Christ Jesus there suffered on the cross In <u>my</u> place, in <u>my</u> place; There he suffered all for <u>me</u> In order to save <u>my</u> soul.
Glória a Jesus, meu pecado cravou Sobre a cruz, sobre a cruz; Sangue precioso minh'alma lavou; Glória ao bondoso Jesus.22	Glory to Jesus, <u>my</u> sin nailed him On the cross, on the cross; Precious blood washed <u>my</u> soul; Glory to the kindly Jesus.

Eu creio, sim, já creio sim, Jesus morreu por mim; Pelo sangue Seu qu'Ele verteu Libertado fui por fim. Pois, quando vi Jesus por mim Sofrendo sobre a cruz, O meu coração, sem hesitação Recebeu o amor e a luz.23	I believe, yes, I already believe, Jesus died for me: By His blood that He shed I am free from death. So when I saw Jesus suffer- ing on the cross for <u>me</u> , <u>My</u> heart, without hesitation Received [His] love and light.
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Utilizing the same emotive capacity demonstrated in her literary 'preaching' about the individualized nature of sin and salvation, Frida made stirring appeals for conversion, through the words of her poems. She pleaded with sinners, alternately warning them of their

sad fate should they fail to make their peace with God, then enticing them toward faith, with promises of lavish heavenly reward.

Vem ao Senhor, vem pecador  
Ele é terno e mui fiel,  
vem, pecador!  
Vem ao Senhor, Deus é amor;  
Ouve Sua terna voz:  
"Vem, pecador!"124

Considera o grande gozo  
Que no Céu esperam; sim  
Aqui lutas, lá repouso,  
Galardão teras enfim.25

Come to the Lord, come sinner  
He is tender and very  
faithful, come sinner!  
Come to the Lord, God is love  
Hear His tender voice:  
"Come, sinner!"

Consider the great joy  
that awaits in Heaven; yes  
Here [there are] struggles,  
there [is] peace,  
You will receive great reward at  
last.

The doctrine of personal salvation, and a call to conversion are the messages most often contained in Vingren's evangelistic hymns. However, Frida also wrote to nurture the existing body of Pentecostal believers. In those works which address the Church, two themes-- faithful endurance through suffering, and the ultimate joy of heaven-- continuously resurface, even in the text of hymns that are largely devoted to subjects other than suffering or the afterlife. Typically, the last verse of Vingren's nurturing hymns end either with a word of encouragement or a word of warning to the faithful, since a day of recompense and reward is soon at hand. Vingren's theology teaches that no matter how painful life on earth may become, Christians who remain faithful to God are given both strength and courage to overcome their difficulties in the present world, and at the same time are assured of their place in a paradisaical world-to-come.

Será a minha sorte  
a dura cruz levar,  
Sua graça e Seu poder  
quero sempre aqui contar.  
Contente com Jesus,  
Levando a minha cruz,

It may be my lot  
to carry a heavy cross,  
His grace and His power  
I want to depend on, always.  
Content in Jesus,  
Carrying my cross,

Eu falo de Cristo  
que é minha luz.  
Fiel a Deus serei,  
o mundo vencerei.26

I talk of Christ  
who is my light.  
I will be faithful to God,  
the world overcome.

Não desanimes,  
por ser tua cruz  
Maior que a de teu irmão; A  
mais pesada levou teu Jesus,  
te consola, então;  
Quando enfim, tu largares  
a cruz,  
Jesus te coroara;  
Com santo gozo em glória e  
luz Te consolara.  
Esqueceras teus lidares,  
tribulações e pesares,  
Quando no Céu desfrutares,  
Perfeita paz.27

Don't be discouraged, if your  
cross is greater than that  
given to your brother; Jesus  
carried one much heavier,  
so be consoled;  
When you finally will be  
released from your cross,  
Jesus will give you a crown;  
With holy joy in glory and  
light He will comfort you.  
You'll forget your labours,  
tribulations and sorrows,  
When in Heaven you'll delight  
in perfect peace.

In Vingren's writing, heaven is depicted as the exact antithesis of the realidade of the Brazilian working-class. In Frida's theology, heaven is a place of bountiful provision for every need, a place of joy where pain never enters and where there is rest from labour. In Frida's own words, heaven is the 'true home' of the soul:

Vem do Céu um som de alegria  
Na escura noite te chamar;

Sounds of rejoicing come from  
Heaven, to call you across  
the dark night;  
So pleasant, so full of  
harmony.

Mui suave e cheio de  
harmonia.  
--O minh'alma, volta p'ra  
teu lar!  
Raios últimos do sol  
se escondem  
na dourada porta de Sião;  
Glória a Deus,  
a porta aberta esta!  
Queres tu no Céu  
feliz morada?  
Pois sera mui triste  
não ir lá.28

--Oh, my soul, you are  
returning to your home!  
The last rays of the sun  
hide themselves  
in the golden door of Zion;  
Glory to God,  
the door is open!  
Do you want to live  
happily, in Heaven?  
Because it will be very sad  
not to go there.

In Frida Vingren's hymns, the preaching of Pentecostal pioneers was adapted into a simple and straightforward message. Through her

musical compositions, Frida cajoled, reproved, encouraged and admonished her constituency, while transmitting a theology that was both practical and memorable. Preaching lasted only for the duration of a spoken sermon, but hymns could be sung (even hummed) over and over, in any location, and at any time. Although she never addressed crowds as a public speaker, Frida was indeed a well-practiced pregadora. Her mode of ministry, though different from others, made best use of the talents she possessed.

#### II. Examining and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Women as Catalysts for Church Growth

##### 1. The House Church Movement: Linking the past and present

Celina de Albuquerque and Maria de Nazaré were the prototypes of female converts to Pentecostalism in the North and Northeast. Ambitious and hardworking devotees of the Church, their lives characterized the energy and enthusiasm of women who entered Assembléia de Deus ranks during its formative years. While not as publicly prominent as Celina and Maria, many lesser-known but equally valuable Church workers who followed in their footsteps also had a strong hand in assuring the success of the movement. Although the existing records of early Assembléia de Deus growth in many Northeastern states are often sketchy or incomplete, it is apparent that females figured prominently in the founding of first congregations in nearly every state of the region. Women were the first Pentecostal believers in Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, and Maranhão. In Bahia, Sergipe, Pernambuco, Paraíba, and Maranhão, females were the first to experience the Baptism of the Holy Spirit.

(See Appendix E). Most importantly, however, women were instrumental in implementing and maintaining the basic Pentecostal strategy of growth through house churches.

As the message of Pentecostalism spread rapidly across the Northeast after 1915, branch works were continually being established following a well-planned and executed pattern: An itinerant preacher would visit a city, where he would rent a meeting hall and hold evangelistic services. Then, once a small group of believers was established, meetings would continue in the home of one of the converts. The group would appoint one of their number to become pastor of the new congregation, and after a few weeks or months of apprenticeship training with the itinerant evangelist, the pastor-appointee would take over sole headship of the house church. The evangelist would leave, to begin ministry in a neighbouring city, where the whole process would be repeated. The newly-founded church in the first locale would begin saving money or materials for the construction of a proper house of worship. In the meantime, the congregation would continue to hold services in homes of church members, evangelizing interested enquirers and catechizing new converts.

The repetetive implementation of the aforementioned cycle would seem to suggest that Vingren and Berg had a pre-meditated strategy for Pentecostal Church growth prior to their arrival in Brazil. However, the plan that homes should double as meeting halls was devised strictly as a temporary survival measure for the infant church, in the years 1911-1914. The Assembleia de Deus stumbled upon the idea of using house churches as a means to growth only after tongues-speakers

were expelled from congregations of traditional Protestants. With rival denominational groups unwilling to allow the Pentecostals to rent their premises for the purpose of establishing a competing assembly, the only recourse for the small group of evangelicals was to gather in homes. Although fostering congregational schisms was not their intent, the Pentecostal sect's decision to 'go underground' helped preserve and protect the young movement.

By the time a decade had passed, Pentecostalism had won the grudging acceptance of denominationalists in some larger Northeastern communities. It would have been possible for the movement to have ceased its practice of meeting in homes. However, the Assembléias was not about to sweep away in one move a successful Church growth strategy that had been carefully developed and refined over a period of several years. The Assembléias had discovered, to its great advantage, that consistent small-scale personal evangelism produced greater long term results in missionizing, than did more spectacular but less frequent public crusades aimed at winning the masses. Furthermore, in contrast to some Catholic and denominationalist strategies, Pentecostals shunned the idea of establishing impressive temples or cathedrals in key government towns and administrative centres as a means of gaining or maintaining legitimacy. The Pentecostal plan for winning converts and establishing churches in new territory was linked to monitoring the family ties of its membership, not evaluating the political or economic status of a given locale. Pentecostals simply 'connected the dots' which linked believers to



their blood relations, as they traced potential converts in cities, towns and villages throughout the Northeast.

It was only logical, having undertaken this style of interpersonal evangelism, that the house church movement should continue. After all, Pentecostalism had gained support for its message not because it succeeded in out-maneuvering traditional Protestant denominations or because it duplicated their style of ministry in a superior way. Rather, Pentecostalism introduced a completely new religious orientation. Its practice was premised on the fact that it was a religion of the people (the perpetuation of the movement was due almost exclusively to working-class leadership), a religion of the senses (the display of emotion was encouraged as a sign of genuine and vibrant faith), and a religion of the home (contacts and converts were forged in the family context).

Over the years, Pentecostals have continued to hone their practice of planting house churches. Even the liturgy of the Pentecostal worship service is well-adapted to the confines of a house church setting. Meetings are conducted in a humble and homely style; intimate gatherings where speaking to one's neighbour while the meeting is in progress is tolerated, and speaking to the congregation as a whole, by means of a public testimony is not only tolerated but actively encouraged. While Catholic church services are by and large non-participatory, Pentecostal services are based upon the interaction and active involvement of its entire constituency. It is not uncommon for between fifty and sixty people to have separate and official parts to play in conducting a Pentecostal service.<sup>29</sup> Preaching is an

interactive exercise between the Pentecostal speaker and his audience. As the sermon is presented, the speaker's delivery is typically punctuated by shouts of 'Amen' and 'Gloria a Deus' from the congregation. Musical accompaniment is provided by a do-it-yourself orchestra featuring simple hand-held instruments such as guitars, accordians, and tambourines. All congregational members join in hymn-singing and clapping in time to the music. Such informality is in direct contrast to traditional denominational liturgy. Catholic masses are performed by priests who, by comparison to their Pentecostal counterparts, speak in hushed monotonies in the transcendent atmosphere of ornately decorated chapels or cathedrals. Denominational churchgoers sing hymns, but usually with the backing of an organist and a practised choir. Who can imagine a pipe organ--or even a piano--being the centrepiece of Pentecostal worship? Pentecostalism is the antithesis of the ecclesiastical establishment.

Organizing each successive congregation from the core membership of a house church is a strategy that has served Pentecostalism well. The group of new believers reaps many practical benefits from the ongoing use of homes as a means of multiplying congregations. For example, by the time a formal church building is ready to be occupied by the membership, the first converts have matured sufficiently to be capable of strong leadership. Apprentice pastors have opportunities to establish their personal faith before being thrust into the public arena. Lay assistants, most of whom are working-class converts who have never before owned property, have time to make careful preparation for the ensuing legal and financial encumbrances of

purchasing land or a church building. Planting house churches has also proven to be a good strategy for growth because it has been both cost and time effective. Only in the most exceptional circumstances do homeowners charge rent for the use of their premises as a church. Furthermore, meeting in homes enables church members to gather on any day or at any time they so desire. In homes, church janitorial duties are looked after in the daily routine of household cleaning. Homes are in neighbourhoods where other homes are located; no one has far to travel in order to attend meetings. Homes provide an 'instant' church building. No time is wasted while a meeting hall is constructed. No European or American mission board has to be contacted so that funds can be released for the building and maintenance of a new church. Lastly, and most importantly, house churches are a successful means of Pentecostal propagation, because homes are primarily the domain of women.

## 2. The Quiet Revolution: Contact and Conversion through the Family

From the very beginning, womens' participation within the Pentecostal movement has been central to its success in establishing respectability as a new religion. Initially, the fledgling church was heavily dependent upon its female members to remould its public image, relying on their support to give the movement a gentler, less radical face than that which had first accompanied the movement. In the earliest days of the Pentecostal presence in the North and Northeast, the stereotypic caricature of a Pentecostal was that of a confrontive firebrand preacher or an ecstatic and emotional mystic. Women who



Plate 7: Assembléia de Deus neighbourhood church, João Pessoa, Paraíba



Plate 8: Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela (Recife).

were wives and mothers as well as Pentecostals were concrete assurance that the movement was not attempting to overthrow all social normality.

Women have also been central to Pentecostal strategies of growth by conversion. Female evangelists were not simply a part of the Church mission programme; at times, women were the total mission programme! In the present decade, as in decades past, female converts are expected to raise their children as practising Pentecostals. Considering that Brazilian women, historically, have often been single parents, this was and is a critical step in assisting the long-range growth of the movement. As well, women are expected to do their best to missionize their consanguine family, and where possible, convert their own husbands and in-laws. Whereas men cannot easily infiltrate community social infrastructures in order to formally introduce a new religious dogma, their wives and daughters often find easy access to the ears of curious-but-cautious enquirers. Women propagate Pentecostalism in the homes of ordinary citizens, gossiping the gospel to neighbours and friends through the activities of everyday family life.

In conducting such informal and inter-personal evangelism, women have proven to be successful in gaining converts from Catholicism to Pentecostalism. It would appear that a home-centered Pentecostal faith has the ability to woo nominal Catholics away from a church-centered religion. Strictly speaking, Catholic ritual emphasizes the church as the place of primary religious jurisdiction; the home is outside the immediate domain of religious law. Homes are controlled by Catholic parents, not by Catholicism itself. Therefore, as competing institutions, the Catholic home is ordinary--even mundane--

while the Catholic church attains the stature of a wholly separate, mystical, and very powerful entity.

By contrast, Pentecostalism elevates the home to a place of sacredness, and demythologizes the church. Through the mechanism of house churches, Pentecostal homes become dominated not just by individuals who wear the name 'Pentecostal', but by Pentecostalism itself. Consequently, church members feel a personal responsibility to support the aims and enforce the rules of the movement within the sphere of their own families. Whereas Catholicism is a religion which stresses right thinking (the memorization of the catechism and the codified responses in the mass are examples of this), Pentecostalism stresses a theology that is meant to be practical, a guide for right living (as its emphasis on a strong separation from the 'corruption' of worldliness and its evangelistic fervour demonstrate).

Even the Pentecostal practice of congregational church government springs from its roots in the house church movement. Historically, the sect has maintained itself through the interlinking of myriads of small congregations. When a church reaches a size that makes house fellowships uncomfortable or unmanageable, it simply plants a new assembly. This means that congregational members appoint or elect their own local leaders. Those in pastoral or teaching positions are the peers of the people they serve, and every congregational member knows his pastor personally. Since ideas for the growth and improvement of the local church are solicited from its membership during business meetings which follow regularly-scheduled services,

most congregados not only attend the meetings, they also feel their contributions to the discussions have genuine influence in determining the direction of the church. Pentecostals often have a very personal stake in the welfare of the institution they support.

Congregational church government also significantly dampens potential jealousies, rivalries and competition between leaders, since there is always the opportunity for the formation of a new congregation, and for the continual emergence and development of grass-roots leadership. This commitment to a democratic leadership model, distinctly different from the hierarchical paradigm employed by Catholicism, has proven to be another factor which has attracted some disgruntled or nominal Romanists to the Pentecostal cause.

The possibility of following the Pentecostal lead in encouraging less formality in liturgy and greater accessibility to decision-making for its lay constituency has been a topic of increasing discussion among the Brazilian Catholic clergy since the late 1960s.<sup>30</sup> Although there has been mounting pressure for renewal in the Church ever since, those who are in legitimate positions of power in the Church and support the 'Liberation' movement are still in the minority. With the exception of the crusading Dom Hélder Câmara, former Archbishop of Olinda and Recife, the highest level of Brazilian Catholicism has been relatively slow to embrace processes of change in the infrastructure of the Church.<sup>31</sup> For the majority of Catholics, therefore, the meaning of 'Church' remains restricted to a building, or to an institution where the rites of passage (baptism, marriage, burial) are carried out. For Pentecostals, however, 'Church' identifies first and

foremost people, not a place. 'The Church' means friends, a real or surrogate family. That the familial aspect of the Pentecostal paradigm works to its advantage against the influence of Romanism is seen quite clearly in the manner in which new migrants to the city are enfolded into the local church, a warm, protective 'incubator' where loving 'brothers' and 'sisters' initially shield the newly arrived campesino from the confusing and strenuous demands of city life, and later, help him to adjust to the new pace of life outside the church 'nursery'.<sup>32</sup> Even the informality and immediacy of organizing for a Pentecostal church service demonstrates the relaxed, family atmosphere maintained within the movement and illustrates its strong contrasting relationship with Catholicism. Whereas Catholic Masses are normally only performed on specified days or at specified times in a church building consecrated for that purpose, Pentecostal meetings can be conducted virtually anywhere or at anytime. No arrangements have to precede an in-house hymn sing or a street corner testimony service. Pentecostalism provides easy access to religion; Catholicism remains more elusive and exclusive. In conducting personal interviews with Catholics-turned-Pentecostals, I discovered that numerous families have been won to Pentecostalism because they became disenchanted with Church 'red tape' and an attitude projected by some parish priests that the concerns of the poor do not really matter. Repeatedly, I heard stories of families whose conversion to Pentecostalism was sparked by the fact that a priest was unwilling to conduct a funeral without being paid. During this period of vulnerability and need, Pentecostal friends or neighbours convinced grieving families to turn



instead to an evangelical faith, where pastors do not demand payment for such services.<sup>33</sup>

Historically, Catholicism has not been the only religious group to lose members of its constituency to Pentecostalism. Older Protestant denominations also failed to secure the loyalties of some of their members, due to the attractive, insistent Pentecostal emphasis on the home and family as the center of the Church. While denominationalists succeeded in communicating knowledge about Protestant doctrine into Brazilian minds through the proliferation of mission-supported schools, they failed to transplant evangelical commitment into Brazilian hearts, the place where it ultimately mattered most.<sup>34</sup> Most Protestant belief was not seen as 'mother's faith'. Obligation towards traditional Protestantism at anything other than a superficial level stirred few, for although it was clear that conversion to Protestantism could be the means to a new lifestyle for the individual, it was never explained (or demonstrated) how adherence to a Protestant viewpoint achieved positive advancement for the family and the nation.

It would appear that until its encounter with Pentecostalism, Brazilian Catholicism had never conceived of a competing religious system which could pose a threat to Roman domination by any means other than by building a new church hall and holding Sunday services. When Pentecostals targeted their evangelistic thrust to reach whole family groups in the community rather than attempting to siphon away a few fringe Romanists, Catholics were unprepared to counter this attack. That Pentecostalism was perceived to be a more serious threat

to Catholicism than any of its Protestant contemporaries was evidenced by the formation of the Santas Missões. Sanctioned by the Catholic hierarchy and often under the direct leadership of local parish priests, the Missões enacted violence and terror against Pentecostals with a scope and ferocity which had not typified its dealings with other eighteenth and nineteenth century Northeastern Protestant infiltrations.

### 3. Modifying the Image of 'The Minister'

#### a. Forging new role models for women

Historically, neither Catholicism nor denominational Protestantism have provided Brazilian working-class women with role models emphasizing active participation or leadership in the religious sphere. Rather, Catholics and denominationalists have most often endorsed female role models which reinforce submission, sacrifice and passivity. In fact, prior to the introduction of the Assembléias to the Northeast, the stereotypic composite of an individual committed to a religious vocation was almost exclusively that of an educated and often Europeanized, ostensibly-celibate male, who belonged to a Catholic teaching or missionary order. The only role models females could look to when considering a vocation to a spiritual life were to be found in contemplation upon the person of the Virgin Mary and any chance encounter with Luso-Portuguese nuns. However, both of these culturally-approved models of religious femininity were virtually inaccessible and intangible to common women. The few nuns who might have been viable role models were normally either serving in hospitals or cloistered in convents where, in contrast to the monastic and

scholastic institutions inhabited by their male clerical counterparts, there existed little if any access to social intercourse or to channels of power in the non-religious community. Nuns did not frequently mix with the outside world, not even with other women. While it might be argued that the Virgin was available and accessible to women (if only through personal prayer and meditation), she also fell short of being a true role model for women seeking a religious vocation, since all that could be known of her was 'interpreted' and explained to females through the teaching and preaching of male priests. Hence, Catholic women who sought to live God-honouring lives were presented with but two lifestyles to emulate: that of the Virgin Mary (the devout and self-sacrificing mother and wife), and that of the nun (a chaste and passive 'bride' who was 'married' to the Church). Neither roles gave substantial impetus to women seeking to integrate their faith with the immediate circumstances of their lives. Active participation in religious spheres outside the cloister or the confessional was not encouraged by these traditional role models.

Early Protestantism fared little better when it came to providing working-class women with an image of female propriety. Denominational ministers were, with few exceptions, middle-class males from Britain or America who espoused a foreign brand of Christianity. Female church workers who accompanied these men were limited almost exclusively to missionary wives. Though these women portrayed strong public leadership in their commitment to the educational advancement of women and girls, they themselves were normally too refined and Westernized to readily identify with the working-class women of Brazil.

A turning point in the history of womens' participation in the Latin American Church occurred with the establishment of Brazilian Pentecostalism. It was significant that when Vingren and Berg stepped ashore in Belém, they were alone. They had no female associates--no single women missionaries who could simply be slotted into the category of 'Pentecostal nuns', and above all, they had no wives. The absence of ready-made role models available for copying or censuring forced Brazilian female converts to forge their own identity as Pentecostal women. Vingren and Berg did not appoint female leaders based on foreign notions of femininity. Brazilian women with strong natural leadership ability rose by common consensus to become the vanguard of the new movement.

Patterns of Pentecostal leadership development have slowly and steadily given the movement a distinct advantage over its denominational rivals, especially in establishing evangelistic inroads among the lower classes. The earliest female converts were able to adopt the role of the evangelista voluntária with a minimum of social dislocation. Unlike Catholic nuns, Pentecostal women did not have to leave their niche in the local community in order to adopt a religious vocation. Further, unlike most Protestant denominationalists, they did not have to marry a minister or missionary in order to exert influence. In contrast to its Catholic and Protestant predecessors, Pentecostalism offered working-class women a significant place in the founding, expansion, and policy-making of a religious movement, while at the same time permitting them to remain in social equilibrium.

This shift away from patterns of Church leadership familiar to most Brazilians radically altered the notions of many new converts towards the criteria by which ministry roles may be assigned or adopted. Whereas in the last century and in the early part of the twentieth century it had been usual for Protestant religious movements to be spearheaded by a select few full-time wage-earning devotees to a church or a church-linked institution, Pentecostalism demonstrated that a new religion could thrive through the efficient deployment of myriads of part-time volunteer workers. The sect taught that ministry was not based solely upon formal sermonizing and catechizing in public places of worship at specified times or on specific days of the week. Nor were full-time paid male workers lauded as the key to church growth. Instead, Church leaders emphasized that lay evangelists of both sexes were to be the catalysts of the pioneer Pentecostal Church.

Early mission strategies were patterned around a strict division of labour, whereby men primarily evangelized other men, and women normally witnessed only to other women and children. In this way, Pentecostalism demonstrated sensitivity towards existing social mores. As well, by involving women as co-equals with men in the front-line advance of the Church, Pentecostals employed a high percentage of their membership in direct evangelistic efforts, and at the same time exploited the powerful latent influences wielded by wives and mothers. If a woman could be made to favour a Pentecostal viewpoint, then in time, her husband and children would be exposed to the influence of the movement through her. As the central figure of the most basic

institution of society--the family--the mother (and her spiritual convictions) carried great weight with her entire household.

- b. Rejecting race as a criteria for determining leadership potential

In addition to demonstrating that neither gender nor class disqualified an individual from fulfilling a religious vocation, Pentecostalism has further modified the prevailing image of 'the minister' by de-emphasizing race as a determining factor in appointment to positions of spiritual leadership. In the early 1900s, this was still a revolutionary concept in Christian practice in the Northeast, especially in view of the historical importance placed upon light skin as an avenue of social advancement.

From colonial time onward, being white, and possessing so-called 'clean blood' (limpo sangue) was indispensable to gaining positions of power in political or ecclesiastical spheres. Laws stipulated that unless a special dispensation had been obtained, marriage with a coloured or a Jewish-descended woman automatically barred a husband and his descendants from holding office under the Crown, from being a member of one of the Portuguese Military Orders (Christ, Aviz, and Santiago), and even from serving on a municipal council. Candidates for the priesthood had to prove that their parents and grandparents, male and female, were legitimate 'Old Christians' of clean blood.

Even the charitable lay order of the Misericórdia refused to admit to membership anyone whose background and blood line was suspect. That no quarter was given on this point, and that debates surrounding the controversies over racial miscegenation were pursued

with vigour in full public view, is born out in the example of a native Bahiana, Joana Leal. Leal's two successive husbands were refused entry into the brotherhood of the Misericórdia on the grounds of the alleged impurity of her blood. Only after extensive official enquiries had traced Joana's grandparents back to a Portuguese village near Coimbra, and written testimony had been secured from the Secretary of the local Misericórdia swearing that the family had been of pure blood, was the second husband finally admitted to membership.<sup>35</sup>

Women seeking a spiritual vocation were also faced with the necessity of proving their racial purity before they could be admitted into a religious order. Nunneries of the Northeast, the first of which were founded at Salvador in 1678, were blatantly racist in the establishment and maintenance of their communities. The Poor Clares' convent of Desterro became celebrated for its racial purity. The entrance requirement for limpo sangue was so well known that a Bahian father, whose daughters were slightly coloured, asked permission from the Crown to send them to Portugal, where their chances of admission to a convent were better.<sup>36</sup>

What Pentecostalism has done for women of the Northeast has been to challenge and then redefine and reorder the priorities of religious vocation. By using female church workers to plant and nurture new assemblies, and by giving public acknowledgement of the fact that female lay ministers are important catalysts contributing to the ongoing growth of the movement, Pentecostalism has opened doors of service within the ecclesiastical community to working class, racially-mixed, and often illiterate peoples. No colour bar, no

educational standard and no 'male only' criteria exist as a prerequisite to religious service.

Although it is not altogether certain of what racial composition the first female Pentecostal leaders were, it is clear that a wide variation of skin colour has always been seen in those holding ministerial positions, in the North and Northeast. Considering that Protestant groups preceding the Pentecostals in Brazil had been in the vanguard of abolitionism, it would have seemed logical for the first Pentecostals to have proselytized extensively among blacks. Furthermore, the largest congregations of Pentecostals founded in the early history of the movement were those formed in port cities circling the 'horn' of Brazil, from Belém to Salvador. In each of these urban centres at the turn of the century, a major percentage of the working-class population was directly descended from Africans imported as slaves. It may be safely assumed, therefore, that many who converted to Pentecostalism and who rose in its ranks as lay preachers and teachers were dark skinned. To date, no scholarly study has examined in detail the single criteria of race as a determinant of religion among non-Catholic groups in Northeastern Brazil.

At the present time, there are numerous notable Pentecostal leaders who are very dark-skinned. Pastor Leônico da Silva, a dark mulatto who is the present pastor-presidente of Cruz Cabugá, the igreja-matriz of the Assembléia de Deus in the state of Pernambuco, is just one case in point.



### c. Avoiding the 'Expert' Stigma

Although many men are also Pentecostal lay evangelists, women possess a distinct advantage over their male counterparts when it comes to fulfilling the role of a volunteer minister, or evangelista voluntária. Since women in Brazilian society do not normally fit into any of the intrusive 'expert' roles, it is relatively easy for female converts to gain access to neighbourhoods and to individual homes in order to spread the Pentecostal message. Whereas canvassing door to door in order to preach and teach about evangelical religion makes their male counterparts an immediate threat to the local priest or denominational minister, identical practices performed by women are frequently overlooked.

In the early years of the Pentecostal movement, ecclesiastical authorities and municipal administrators seemed mildly amused by the activities of evangelistas voluntárias. Women were considered non-threatening or even inconsequential to the process of philosophic and religious debate. Far from proving to be a hindrance, the chauvinistic attitudes of male clerics only helped facilitate the goals of the evangelistas. With maximum freedom and a minimum of effort, working-class women launched into a wide variety of ministry activities. By and large, evangelistas were highly successful in carrying out their duties. The Assembléia de Deus in Pará stands as a case in point. Beginning with Celina de Albuquerque and others of her generation, the Assembléia in Belém has been served by successive hosts of female lay ministers. By 1980, the city of Belém had fifty-nine congregations and 22,451 members. A major contributing factor

to the steady growth of Pentecostalism in Belém rests in the fact that in 1980 alone, evangelistas collectively made 36,697 official visits on behalf of their local churches.<sup>37</sup>

#### d. Women as Church Planters

Historically, not only have female lay ministers assisted the growth of the Church through evangelistic home visitation, they have often served as the catalyst for the establishment of branch works. Typically, this occurs when a female convert suggests to her church family that a midweek meeting be established in her home, as a means of missionizing a region of the city which has had no prior evangelical witness. It is not uncommon for a zealous new convert to spontaneously offer that her residence be turned into a temporary church so that her immediate neighbourhood can be canvassed by Pentecostal workers.

With little or no outside help, many working-class evangelistas voluntárias have repeatedly and successfully established thriving churches. In Antenor Navarro, Pernambuco, a church came into being through the perseverance of just one woman. The lone convert from a 1938 evangelistic meeting conducted by itinerant preachers, the woman faithfully missionized in the city in the months following her conversion. At first she made little headway. However, during the succeeding year, three converts were won to the Pentecostal cause. By the time five years had passed, the congregation had blossomed to thirty-five members and from then on, the church grew rapidly. In some locales, such as Jequié, Bahia, the entire founding congregation was composed of women.<sup>38</sup>

As church planters, Pentecostal women often completely changed the face of existing ecclesiastical infrastructures in their local communities. This, in turn, caused previously-accepted social mores to be altered. In Redenção, Ceará, Raimunda Ferreira managed to overturn the religious and social conventions of an entire town in just one day. As a new convert, Ferreira offered her home to be used as a Pentecostal meeting hall. While that in itself was nothing exceptional, the townspeople were shocked to discover that the neighbourhood residence normally used as a tavern and dancehall had suddenly metamorphasized into a church.

Evangelistas undertook major time commitments in their job as church planters. Normally, churches were established only in the homes of individuals whose invitations had been generous and unqualified, for it was often uncertain how long a period of time a congregation might be meeting in a house church, before moving into other premises. Working-class congregations often took several months or longer to save the funds for a proper church building. In the interim, the home of the evangelista was a virtual flurry of non-stop activity. For example, in Currais Novas, Rio Grande do Norte, Severina Moraes Pereira maintained a growing congregation in her home for the entire period of 1945-48, before the group was able to rent a store-front as a meeting place. As late as 1975, in Redenção, Ceará, a house church was maintained for three years, while the congregation saved money to erect a building.<sup>39</sup>

ENDNOTES: SPIRITUAL SOULPTRESSES

- 1 Ivar Vingren, O Diário do Pioneiro Gunnar Vingren, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), p. 36. My translation.
- 2 There may have been Brazilians who were Pentecostal by practice and doctrine earlier than 1911, although they did not call themselves Pentecostal. In Endruweit (p. 10) there is a reference to a Brazilian, Paulo Malaquias, who claims to have experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in 1908, when still a Baptist pastor. Vingren (p. 35) mentions a similar incident, when he describes the experience of a Baptist pastor who spoke in tongues after fourteen days of prayer. See Wilson Harle Endruweit, 'Pentecostalism in Brazil: A Historical and Theological Study of its Characteristics' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, North West University, 1975) and Vingren, O Diário do Pioneiro Gunnar Vingren.
- 3 Daniel Berg, Enviado Por Deus. Memórias de Daniel Berg (São Paulo, 1959), p. 47. My translation.
- 4 Relatório da Convenção Geral das Assembleias de Deus (Belém, 1936).
- 5 At this time, the Manaus Igreja-matriz had thirty daughter churches scattered in the interior of Amazônia, with a total community of over twelve thousand members. Celina de Albuquerque, Letter to Artur Piedade, (Regional Presbytery, Belém Assembléia de Deus) 25 October 1967.
- 6 Abraão de Almeida, História das Assembleias de Deus no Brasil, second edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1982), p. 40. My translation.
- 7 Endruweit, p. 13.
- 8 Almeida, p. 26.
- 9 Gunnar Vingren reports that on one occasion, Maria de Nazaré and Celina de Albuquerque sang a duet in an unknown 'tongue' while under the power of the Holy Spirit. See Vingren, pp. 67, 59.
- 10 Almeida, pp. 133-34; Vingren, p. 55.
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 Almeida, p. 125.
- 13 Recently, conditions have been so critical that Pope John Paul II has permitted two married men to be ordained to the priesthood, in the remote interior of Brazil. (The priests had to promise to renounce sexual relations). Brazilian Cardinal Aloisio Lorscheider made this disclosure at the Vatican Synod (October 1990). Worldwide, the Roman Catholic Church has had a net decline

- of 16,500 priests in the decade 1980-1990. Robert T. Zintl, 'Big Gamble on the Priesthood', Time (5 November 1990), 77-78 (p.77).
- 14 On the community in Joãozeiro, see further Ralph Della Cava, 'Brazilian Messianism and National Institutions, a reappraisal of Canudos and Joãozeiro', Hispanic American Historical Review, 48 (1968), pp. 402-420; Della Cava, Miracle at Joãozeiro (New York, 1970); Shepard Forman, The Brazilian Peasantry (New York, 1975); Sue Anderson Gross, 'Religious Sectarianism in the Sertão of Northeastern Brazil 1815-1966', Journal of Inter-American Studies, 10 (1968), pp. 369-383.
  - 15 Highlighting the contrasting relationship between the shortage of Catholic priests and the abundance of Protestant ministers in Brazil, Hollenweger notes that in at least one Brazilian diocese, Upper Paraná, all the priests except the bishop are foreigners, whereas in the same diocese all the evangelical ministers are Brazilians. Walter J. Hollenweger, The Pentecostals (London, 1972), p.96.
  - 16 Vingren, p. 87.
  - 17 Frida Vingren, Letter to Sweden, July 5, 1917.
  - 18 Samuel Nymtström, Despertamento Apostólico no Brasil (Belem, 1919).
  - 19 Vingren, pp. 98-100.
  - 20 Almeida, p. 19.
  - 21 Endnotes 21-28 refer to a number of Frida Vingren's hymns and choruses. In the manuscript, the original poems are printed in parallel text with my English translations. Each of the songs are taken from the commonly-used hymnbook of the Assembleia de Deus, Harpá Cristã, fifth edition (Rio de Janeiro, 1980). The hymn title, number and relevant verse references are indicated in each endnote. 'Salvou Batou' (177, verse 1 and chorus).
  - 22 'En Meu Lugar' (472). Emphasis added.
  - 23 'Eu Creio, Sim' (59, chorus and verse 2). Emphasis added.
  - 24 'O Salvador me Achou' (397, chorus).
  - 25 'Seguir a Cristo' (320, verse 7).
  - 26 'Se Cristo Comigo Vai' (515, verses 2 and 4).
  - 27 'A Mão do Arado' (394, verses 2 and 4).
  - 28 'O Peregrino e a Glória' (361, verses 2, 3, 4).

- 29 This was confirmed, statistically, in counts conducted in every church service I attended. The idea to compile statistical evidence on such a novel barometer of Pentecostal 'success' vis-a-vis the Catholic church came from reading the work of a non-Pentecostal American missionary researcher who made a similar observation in churches in Bolivia and Chile. See C. Peter Wagner, Look out the Pentecostals are coming! (Carol Stream, Illinois, 1975).
- 30 Since that time, Catholic Comunidades de Base (Base Communities) have been in existence throughout the nation. Some comunidades are cooperative farms, others are religious retreat centres; but all are villages run by and for Catholic laity. Priests live with villagers, assisting in the planning and administering of the community. However, the real power base of the community and the final say in decision-making always rests in the hands of the elected leadership, not the appointed church representative. Thus when Monsignor Antônio Fragoso states that in his Northeastern diocese there exist ten parishes, each with 150 comunidades, that is, a total of 1,500 in the diocese, it is understandable that this experience could offer hope for significant reformation within the Roman church at least at the regional level. See Edward L. Cleary, Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today (New York, 1985); Emanuel J. De Kadt, Catholic Radicals in Brazil (London, 1970); Michael Dodson, 'Liberation Theology and Christian Radicalism in Contemporary Latin America', Journal of Latin American Studies, 11 (1979), pp. 203-222; Enrique Dussel, A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981), p. 212 ff.
- 31 Notable among the Northeastern Brazilian bishops who aligned themselves with Hélder Câmara during his tenure as Archbishop are Dom José Tavora of Aracaju, João da Mota e Albuquerque of São Luís do Maranhão, Avelar Brandão Vilela of Teresina, and José Pires of João Pessoa. For a thorough discussion on reformist politics and religion in Brazil, see Enrique Dussel, A History of the Church in Latin America: Colonialism to Liberation (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981).
- 32 The general statement that Pentecostalism is 'the refuge of the masses' is accurate, although as Willens showed in his study of Pentecostals in Brazil and Chile, certain segments of the working class respond in far-greater numbers than do others to the invitation to enter the Pentecostal fold. See further, Christian Lalive D'Epina, Haven of the Masses (London, 1985) and Emilio Willens, Followers of the New Faith (Nashville, Tennessee, 1967).
- 33 Interview with 'Irma Christina' and 'Irma Marta', June 17, 1985.
- 34 One case in point may be drawn from the work of the Convenção Batista Brasileira in Recife. An internal survey was produced

by the Baptists to measure the number of conversions registered yearly between 1954 and 1966 in the mission-sponsored Casa da Amizade (Friendship House), a learning centre for the disadvantaged, where student teachers from the Seminário de Educadoras Cristãs do volunteer instruction in order to fulfill necessary hours of practicum prior to graduation. In the thirteen years inclusive in the survey (the survey concluding in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Seminary), the average ratio of students enrolled to the number of decisions to convert was only 5.07 percent. (See Table, below).

Casa da Amizade: Enrollment and Registered Decisions (1954-1966)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Enrolled</u>	<u>Registered Decisions</u>	<u>% Decisions/Enroll</u>
1954	132	2	1.51
1955	500	6	1.20
1956	700	-	-
1957	650	5	.76
1958	780	18	.23
1959	1487	80	.55
1961	2420	220	.90
1962	2530	164	6.48
1963	2700	219	8.11
1964	3417	267	7.81
1965	3095	233	7.52
1966	4200	200	4.76

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 Total: 21,871 1414  
 \* Average yearly percent: decisions/enrollment 3.6  
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Source: Developed from enrollment and conversion statistics in Mildred Cox Mein, Casa Formosa (Recife, 1966).

Note: Registered decisions for 1956 are unavailable. Statistics for 1960 are as follows: enrollment: 1000; decisions: 261. As the seminary posits no explanation for this unprecedented ratio of decisions to enrollment, this single year must be suspect and therefore has been omitted from the table, in order to maintain a representative result in the average yearly percentage of decisions to enrollment.

- 35 A. J. R. Russell-Wood, Fidalgoes and Philanthropists, (London, 1968), p.137.
- 36 C. R. Boxer, Mary and Misogyny. (London, 1975), p.58. Indeed, the convent of Desterro gained genuine notoriety during the colonial era. By way of a commentary on the nuns' lavish way of life, the splendour of their religious services, and the sumptuous entertainments which they gave during the Lenten Carnival and on other occasions, Boxer (p. 57) jibes: '...the place sound[ed] more like a Bunny Club than an austere religious institution'. Small wonder that, under these circumstances, many aristocratic young women of Bahia preferred becoming Poor Clares in the well-endowed and relatively uninhibited Convent of Desterro to either marriage or spinsterhood in a home of their own.

At the time of the founding of the convent, in 1677, the govern-

ment permitted a maximum number of fifty places to be on offer to prospective nuns. However, by 1717, there was such a demand for entry into the institution that the convent was permitted to double its population. While this did nothing to alleviate the shortage of white women in the regional marriage pool, it did stop the exodus of the daughters of the upper classes leaving for Portugal with their rich dowries, to enter European nunneries. For more on the Desterro convent and the question of dowries see Russell-Wood, Fidalgos and Philanthropists, pp. 178 ff.

- 37 Assembléias de Deus no Estado do Pará, O Estandarte Evangelico, 2 (1980).
- 38 In 1945, colporteurs Francisco Lopes and Antônio Bispo conducted Pentecostal meetings in Jequié. From the nucleus of a group of seven women converts grew a church which today has over five-hundred members and four daughter congregations. Almeida, pp. 162, 195.
- 39 Almeida, pp. 143, 153.



## VI. PENTECOSTAL PRACTICE: WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

### A. The Incorporation and Discipling of New Converts

Unlike Roman Catholicism, Pentecostalism has no official catechism whereby its membership is schooled in the cardinal beliefs and practices of the Church. Yet, Pentecostal tradition does incorporate distinct mechanisms which serve as markers to guide new converts into responsible Church membership. Congruent with its working-class roots, Pentecostalism catechizes almost exclusively through oral rather than written means. Newer converts learn how to express themselves in an approved manner through serving an auditory apprenticeship; they listen carefully to the spontaneous verbal rehearsal of older members' conversion stories, and then copy or adapt much of the same verbage in describing their own journey of faith. This apprenticing or 'discipling' is on-going, a behind-the-scenes component in nearly every Pentecostal gathering.

#### 1. The Testimony Service

The conversion testimony is a fundamental element of the Pentecostal worship service. The procedure is simple: in the presence of his pastor, his friends and the assembled congregation, a crente bears verbal witness of his decision to convert. Every church member is encouraged and in some instances, required to testify, on an unstructured but frequent basis. If called upon by the appointed leader of a given service, the believer is obligated to speak. Never once have I witnessed anyone declining to testify in a Pentecostal meeting.

To be able to recount a scintillating personal testimony is indispensable in establishing oneself as a successful preacher or evangelist. Those with dramatic conversion stories are often featured as guest speakers at meetings where many non-believers are known to be present. Pastors will often call upon the congregation's best impromptu speakers to testify at youth rallies, evangelistic meetings, or during special anniversary gatherings. It is often the case that the more radical an individual's conversion experience, the more highly he is esteemed by the church congregation. Many Brazilian Pentecostals--both male and female--are engaging, powerful speakers, having honed their skills in extemporaneous street corner evangelism. Stories recounting the triumph of good over evil in the personal life of the public speaker can take on epic proportions. The oral autobiographies are received by an appreciative and enthusiastic audience, who laugh, applaud, or feign dismay, in keeping with the sentiment of the story. It is apparent that Pentecostal testimonies are as much an entertainment event as a component of a worship service.

One notable conversion story which was frequently repeated to me was the tale of Helena Brandão, a former pornographic actress and practicing Umbandist who is now a Pentecostal Christian. She first related her conversion story in a television documentary aired nationwide, in 1985. In the same year, her testimony was published in book form, by the Casa Publicadora das Assembléias de Deus in Rio de Janeiro. Brandão writes in Minha Experiência Com Os Espíritos:

Inwardly, I felt very restless and uneasy. Nothing really satisfied me. There was an emptiness that was difficult to fill. I sought solitude, even in the midst of the crowd. I was searching to fill this vacuum inside

me, and was straining for answers to questions which no one could answer. Finally, I began to be interested in Eastern mysticism. I read about yoga, transcendental meditation and the third eye...but it all was so complicated and so vague that I finally gave up. I was afraid of death. That fear grew into terror and obsession. I became so superstitious that I wouldn't even leave home without first consulting my horoscope, or without crossing myself when I saw a black cat. I felt like I was a prisoner.<sup>1</sup>

Excerpts from Brandão's story include many phrases typical of the Pentecostal testimony 'formula'. Expressions such as 'nothing satisfied me... I was afraid of death...I was a prisoner' as well as the words 'searching' and 'empty' are exactly the stylistic verbal forms used in evangelistic services in Assembléias throughout Recife. Whether consciously recognized by Pentecostals or not, there is a definite pattern for presenting an acceptable public witness of faith.

## 2. Second-generation Pentecostals and 'Backsliding': Contrasting relationships between the genders

The inability to reproduce a correct testimony formula is a worry to many Pentecostal youths. The inevitable eventuality is that once young people enter middle adolescence, they will have to frequently and publicly recount their personal conversion story if they wish to become full members in good standing, in the Assembléia. The anxiety of facing this reality has created a significant status crisis in the Church.

Several youths in the Casa Amarela assembly confided to me their wistful longing to possess a more dramatic conversion story. Whereas their parents had converted from Catholicism, Spiritism, or non-charismatic Protestant denominations to Pentecostalism as adults, these young people had been virtually born and raised in Pentecost-

alism. As first generation Pentecostals, their mothers and fathers had made radical breaks with their past lifestyles in order to become members of a new church fellowship. In contrast, the Assembléia youth--second-generation believers--have never undergone a dramatic break with tradition such as that which their parents experienced. For these young people, tradition is the Pentecostal Church! Youths deliberate over their identity crisis by asking themselves whether they have made independent decisions to become Pentecostal, or whether they have merely been steered into it, blind and unthinking. When they relate their personal testimonies, there are no epic battles of right and wrong to embroider for the interest and entertainment of attentive assemblies, no crisis event which heralds their turning to a Pentecostal faith. They can recount little more than a safe passage through life, born and raised as a Pentecostal. From the youths' point of view, their testimonies seem bland and boring. Consequently, many young people do not believe that they possess the dynamism necessary to take up a full-time religious vocation. They believe that unless they do something unusual, they cannot make an impact on their local assembly or gain the notice of their parents and pastor. According to Recife Pentecostal young people, being a model believer from the cradle to the grave does not necessarily provide greater opportunity for service within the Church than that which adult converts experience, nor does it automatically enhance the position or reputation of those youths who have ambition to become future Church leaders.

Hence the matter of Pentecostal apostates, or 'backsliders'. 'Backslider' is the term most commonly used by Pentecostals to refer to a person who having once made a profession of faith, later renounces his personal spiritual commitment and allegiance to the Church, and instead adopts a worldly (ie. sinful) lifestyle. Young men are especially known to backslide. Often in conjunction with the pressures of the transition to adulthood (entrance into university or a trade school, a move away from home or conscription into the army)<sup>2</sup>, male youths renounce the moral restraints of the church and let their association with Pentecostalism lapse. Still, at the end of their military duty or their university term, many young men experience a dramatic turn of events, whereby they tire of their 'sinful' lifestyle and seek to be restored to the Church.

With this recommitment to the Church after a temporarily absence-by-choice, it is as though a rite of passage has been enacted. With a story of radical reformation behind them, backsliders can now recount testimonies which have some flair! As soldiers, the young men will have proved themselves in competition with other males as strong, disciplined, and capable of controlled aggression. As students, they will have demonstrated a similar commitment to discipline, as well as having achieved at least some success in academic learning and independent critical thinking. In both roles, young men are pressured by their peers to prove themselves capable of coping with the vices of adulthood. Provided that they do not go to extremes of becoming addicted to drugs or alcohol, or father an illegitimate child during

their period of backsliding, these youths are re-accepted into the Pentecostal fold with a minimum of fuss.

In effect, backsliding and restoration enable young crentes to achieve spiritual equality with their parents and church elders. Returning wholeheartedly to Pentecostalism after having asserted their independence through short forays into 'the world' seems to promote a new and more binding relationship between backsliders and their former congregations. Church elders accord increased respect to returned apostates, for it is believed that these youths will have grown to greater maturity as a result of making the courageous choice to humble themselves before congregational elders, complying with the conditions of whatever discipline is meted out by their order. The youths are also praised for their wisdom, for having thought through the respective value systems of the Church and the world before reaffirming their commitment to the priority of a spiritual lifestyle. As well, church elders often feel a greater sense of personal responsibility toward a returned backslider, than to a believer who never apostacizes. Elders feel that they personally may have been partly to blame for the backslider's sin, by being neglectful of his training, or being unsympathetic counsellors. These concerns translate into increased attention being given the returning youth, thereby solidifying his increased status in the social structure of the assembly. Many former backsliders go on to become active leaders in their assembly.

Interestingly, young women who temporarily desert their Pentecostal faith face much more severe discipline and greater resistance to their attempt to re-enter the church fellowship than do their male

counterparts. Reluctance to extend immediate and full restoration to a woman who has apostacized is one area where the dynamics of Brazilian culture supercede the official teaching of the Church. By refusing to grant women the same easy access back into congregational fellowship, Pentecostals are acknowledging--or, arguably, supporting--the so-called 'double standard' of sexuality which prevails in the defining of gender in the Brazilian mindset. Whereas male apostates are seen to have proved their manhood through liaisons in the mainstream community, the young women are accused of risking their reputation. Pentecostals stridently oppose premarital sex or extra-marital relationships, yet most Church members interviewed echoed the assumption that while male sexual promiscuity was sinful, it would have to be tolerated and forgiven as mere weakness. On the other hand, a 'loose woman' was a shame to herself and her entire family. If a girl's virginity was in question, or worse, if she had become an unwed mother while a backslider, her whole character became suspect. Could she be trusted? Would she, consciously or unconsciously, tempt the men of the congregation to commit sexual sin? Could such an undisciplined person be given any responsibility in the assembly? A 'prodigal son' could always marry or move away if he needed to save face. A 'prodigal daughter' could not so readily do so.

Due to the cautious reception received by women who seek to re-enter the church after a falling away, one might think that a relatively low percentage of women are Church members. In fact, the opposite is true. The majority of congregations are comprised of women. Records of the Recife Assembléia de Deus dating from 1918

onward indicate that during the last seven decades female membership in Pentecostal congregations in the city has been maintained with extraordinary constancy at or about 63 to 65 percent of the total Church body.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, observations garnered from personal attendance at numerous services at a variety of Recife churches, together with an examination of corresponding Ficha de Identificação indicates that while males and females are almost equally represented in Pentecostal Church membership the number of female congregados far outnumber men. This may be accounted for by the fact that working-class women in Brazilian society are generally forced to abide by their husbands' assent or dissent when seeking permission to acquire official membership in any organization. Many women whose husbands are not Pentecostal are not permitted to officially join the movement, though they attend all services and faithfully give tithes to the church. The ratio differential between women and men in Recife Pentecostal adherence varies between 2:1, 3:1 and even 4:1, depending upon which assembly and which function is being monitored.<sup>4</sup>

Since females are, numerically, the driving force of the Recife Pentecostal churches, the reasons for their conversion and their subsequent roles in the church congregations are doubly crucial to understanding the history and social development of Pentecostalism in the Northeast.

What is it, then, that draws women into the Pentecostal fold and keeps them there, inspite of censure and discipline? What factors promote adherence and loyalty to this religious movement? While each woman is different and most conversion stories complex, after numerous



interviews, discernable patterns began to clearly emerge, as reasons for female conversion to Pentecostalism.

### 3. Reasons for Conversion to Pentecostalism

#### a. Individual spiritual experience

One factor which makes Pentecostalism uniquely attractive among its religious competitors in Brazil is that it both espouses and encourages individual supernatural experience. In this, it differs from both Roman Catholicism and Spiritism. While these religions may tolerate individuals outside the established hierarchy of their infrastructure who claim to have spiritual insight and contact with the divine, they do not advocate that every person under their institutional authority ought to have a constant inner spiritual 'pipeline' to God. Non-Pentecostal religions often down-play individual spiritual attainment, since insistence on a high degree of personal participation in spiritual ritual would endanger the status of priests and mediums who are accorded high prestige in their respective religious subcultures, as mediators between humans and the divine.

By contrast, Pentecostal ministers are neither mediums who initiate others into mysteries of hidden knowledge, nor priests who perform spiritual sacrifice on behalf of others. Rather, they are evangelists, preachers and teachers who exhort their hearers to take matters concerning eternal destiny into their own hands. Pentecostal pastors repeatedly emphasize the need for believers to make public individual commitments to faith. They similarly extol the virtue of a crente reading the Bible for herself and applying that biblical

message in a practical way to her everyday living. Furthermore, preachers stress the likelihood of receiving answers to prayer based in proportion to the individual seeker's sincerity and devotion. Pentecostals contend that while a minister's prayer can be powerful and helpful, the real determinant of an effective petition to God rests within each believer: 'as you have believed, so be it done unto you'.<sup>5</sup> Working-class women respond to this definition of faith. While in other Churches, education and a religious upbringing are seen as necessary pre-requisites for successful attainment of some levels of spirituality, Pentecostalism teaches no such notion to its adherents. Each congregada is encouraged to grow in her faith, as God enables her.

Nowhere is this emphasis upon the necessity and obligation of each crente establishing a personal link with God seen more clearly than in the pursuit of Holy Spirit baptisms. Fichas de identificação have a prominently highlighted space on them to indicate where and when a Pentecostal believer has spoken in tongues for the first time! Information about what would ordinarily be a private spiritual matter becomes public knowledge in Pentecostal circles, and can work, by means of social pressure, to motivate each member to undertake greater personal spiritual quests.

Since personal devotion is one key to spiritual power, an individual can always be hopeful that her spiritual life will improve. A crente is limited in spiritual growth only as she limits herself. If she can have faith to believe, she can also receive.

b. Divine Healing

Inducement to convert to Pentecostalism is further solidified through the Pentecostal practice of divine healing, that act which emphasizes the melding of the natural faith of the believer with the supernatural act of God. Overwhelmingly, the largest number of responses which women gave in explanation of their Pentecostal conversion had to do with this breakthrough of a supernatural encounter into their otherwise ordinary lives.

It is not surprising that a grass roots movement like Pentecostalism should emphasize the miraculous, especially in a nation like Brazil, where historically, there has been great importance assigned to mystical, mysterious aspects of religion (as in divination and communion with the dead in animistic tribal religion and Spiritist belief, or the transubstantiation of bread and wine in Catholic ritual). As well, it is the very reality of Brazil itself that draws people to Pentecostal meetings in hopes of experiencing miraculous healing cures. In a country where there is a great lack of hospitals and in which medicine is too costly for the majority, where the rate of infant mortality is almost one in ten, and where life expectancy at birth does not guarantee that the average worker will live to enjoy retirement, the promise of divine healing, which happens through faith in God alone, attracts the masses not so much because of their desire to attend worship as because of their need to be free from suffering and sickness.<sup>6</sup>

Working-class women especially have need of a divine physician, since very often they have no money to pay doctors' or pharmacists'

fees. It was not uncommon to hear women tell that they had walked into a Pentecostal meeting skeptical but desperate, looking to faith healing as a last resort for a cure in a seemingly impossible situation. 'Irma Severina' had just such an experience. She says:

I suffered from stomach problems, and no less than eleven doctors told me that there was no help for me. I became very ill, lost twenty-eight kilos in weight, and the situation became absolutely critical. I gave the problem over to the Lord Jesus and He healed me, in the Assembléia de Deus...7

'Irma Raimunda' emphasizes that it was not medicine, but a miracle which effected her cure:

I was pregnant and very sick. For a time, I was hospitalized. But one night, after hearing the preaching of a pastor named Geziel Gomes, the Lord healed me. Also, my son Roque was sick. But without medical help, the 'Doctor of doctors' completely healed him. This was only the beginning of many blessings that the Lord Jesus has done in my family.8

Another church member adds:

I had a knee ailment and the doctors prescribed injections and pills. But I accepted Jesus [i.e. converted to Pentecostalism] and He healed me without the necessity of those medicines.9

In the Campo Grande church, Sister Maria Moura tells how her commitment to Christ resulted from an act of divine healing.

I saw the huge tent on the lot, and thought that the circus was in town. So I entered eagerly, only to find that it was an evangelistic meeting. When I saw it was the crenates and not a circus, I was disappointed. Yet, I couldn't seem to move from the place where I was sitting. It was as if I were frozen in place. I couldn't even move to stand up.

But when the pastor said "If someone here has sickness, and needs prayer...come forward", I sprang to my feet almost unaided and went to the front. Pastor Geraldo, Pastor Vital and Missionário Eduardo prayed for me. I was instantly healed of a chronic stomach disorder.

The Pastor went on to ask for those who would wish to acknowledge Jesus, and receive salvation. I automatically raised my hand. That was the moment. There was no deliberation or agonizing over a decision. I had been healed, and now I knew I wanted a personal relationship with my God, my healer.10

Members from the Cruz Cabugá Assembléia tell other stories of remarkable healing. Abraão Benedito de Souza related that

My wife...suffered from cancer, and was treated in three different hospitals, where she stayed for forty-five days. She returned home, and six months later she contracted a fever. We then returned to the doctor, who told me that the cancer had returned and this time it was inoperable and incurable.

I didn't even try any more possible remedies. I felt myself stirred to seek God. In anguish, I...begged the Lord to let my wife live, in order that her testimony of healing would benefit others. I took her home, and the Lord healed her, for the glory of His name.<sup>11</sup>

Another dramatic healing, a story much circulated among the Recife churches, told of an incident which had occurred in Anapá.

A brother, a member of the church in Macapá, was bitten by a poisonous snake and had just twelve hours to live. He walked some sixty metres back to his house, but already his eyesight was obscured and his leg was dragging. He gathered his family, to pray for his life.

The Lord heard their prayer. When pastor Luis Perelira de Lima arrived there to take him to Pronto Socorro, it had been forty-eight hours since the snake had struck. The doctors said that he was a lucky man. He responded that he was a crente, and that the Lord had stopped the venom of the snake!<sup>12</sup>

Pentecostals take quite literally the Biblical statements 'with God nothing is impossible', and 'these signs will accompany those who believe: they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hand on sick people, and they will get well'.<sup>13</sup>

#### c. Supernatural signs

Other factors acknowledged by women as having strongly influenced their conversions to Pentecostalism are unexplainable visions or voices which offer guidance for living or confirm the need for personal salvation. Individuals' claims of having achieved direct

contact with the supernatural world are taken very seriously by Brazilians in general and by Spiritists and Pentecostals in particular. No one in Pentecostal leadership openly scoffs or laughs if a member of the congregation says she has received a heavenly visitation or revelation. The authenticity of a claimant to spiritual insight is easily and quickly proven or disproven. Simply, if someone says she has received a supernatural sign, then her life must demonstrate this fact. Only that person who has a changed character or who suddenly possesses abilities she has previously lacked, conclusively proves that she has received a divine visitation. For example, a woman who claims that she has encountered God, but continues to live in drunkenness, is judged by attentive crentes to be a liar. She has not heard from God. Conversely, a woman who becomes a good wife and mother after years of having poorly cared for her family confirms by her actions that her verbal testimony is true.

'Irma Teresa' relates the supernatural visitation which cemented her conversion decision:

My sister-in-law brought me to the church for the first time on November 30, 1964. There, under the ministry of Pastor Vital, I responded to the call for salvation.

Up until this time, I had had a very bad smoking habit. I smoked two packs of cigarettes every day. But after my conversion, I went from a two-pack-a-day habit, to smoking just one cigarette every once in a while.

I worked for a French family in Boa Viagem as a maid. It wasn't easy being there, because there were always cigarettes around the house. I was severely tempted. After four days of just thinking about smoking, but not actually doing it, I finally gave in, took a cigarette, and smoked it. I was physically ill.

In bed at night, I was bothered by a chronic leg inflammation. All of a sudden, Jesus appeared before me, a figure standing at the end of my bed. I heard His voice, telling me I was healed--to go get a bottle of whiskey, wash my leg with the whiskey, rinse my leg, and I would be healed.

My employer wanted to take me to the doctor the next morning, since I had been so ill the night before. But I was totally well. I obeyed the voice that spoke to me from the vision of Christ, and now, my life had changed. It was after this experience that I gained new freedom in my spiritual life, and received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit.<sup>14</sup>

This story of an appearance of Christ to 'Irma Teresa' is wholeheartedly believed by the members of her church. The conclusive proof supporting her claims is her changed life. Twenty years after the encounter, she is a strong crente, and has had no recurrence of her smoking habit. Though her husband is not yet a believer, she has raised her large family as Pentecostal Christians. All of her children are actively involved in church programmes. The testimony of her life corroborates her words.

To Pentecostals, '...the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power'.<sup>15</sup> Supernatural occurrences are an expected part of the life of a true believer. If, after several months of involvement with the church, a congregada cannot testify that something out of the ordinary has happened to her, personally, while in witness or worship, then doubts are automatically raised regarding the depth or even the reality of her spiritual commitment and Christian maturity.

Having come to a fundamental understanding of what motivates many women to convert to Pentecostalism, it is equally important to examine what occurs in the life of a crente after she has become a Church member. Understanding the social dynamics and the infrastructure of the Church with regard to the roles, rights and responsibilities assigned by gender is crucial to a well-rounded understanding of the philosophy and practice of Pentecostalism.

## B. Life in the Assembly

### 1. The Ideal Woman

Numerous components contribute to the overall composition of an ideal woman, as defined by working-class Pentecostals. In actuality, most teaching about notions of femininity does not come from women, but directly from the minds and mouths of male pulpiteers. That most Pentecostal pastors support obedience, submission and self-sacrifice as desirable female traits is evidenced in the kinds of biblical and real-life examples which predominate in public sermonizing, and in their private counsel with women.

Of the Pentecostal women interviewed, those who were most supportive of a traditional assessment of female virtues were mainly middle-aged women who had been long-time church members, and women of any age who had recently converted. The first group could not readily articulate why they so closely followed the opinion of the status quo. However, by observation, it seemed apparent that they had uncritically adopted the viewpoint of the church leader simply out of habit and familiarity. Their position in the congregation was secure and comfortable; there was nothing to be gained by holding a dissenting opinion. In contrast, the second group gave explicit explanations for their conformity to accepted notions of femininity. Recent converts were aware of the fact that their acceptance in the new congregation would be predicated upon careful adherence to institutional belief and behaviour. In order to more quickly and easily assimilate into the church community, converts chose to support pastoral opinions on virtually every subject. The notion of 'correct' femininity was just



one item on a lengthy list. From both mature believers and new converts came words that echoed traditional views of women as weak, meek and submissive, when it came to identifying the aspirations of their lives: 'to be a good wife and a good mother'; 'to be dedicated to works of love'; 'to be faithful in every aspect of life'; 'to have fought the good fight'; 'to be a faithful servant'; 'to live in such a way that when I am dead and gone, people will still point to my good works and remember me with love'.<sup>16</sup>

One group of women who are both active in many church programmes while also being activists who lobby for change within the institution are young, upwardly-mobile women. Most of these women have grown up in the Church, and have secure relationships with congregational authorities. Many of these women are daughters of church elders or board members. As a group, they tend to be particularly thoughtful and evaluative in assessing potential growth and new direction for the Assembléias. They see an expanding role for women in the twenty-first century Church, as teachers, lay leaders and administrators. Their remarks indicate an increasing degree of sophistication and openness toward a view of femininity that even reverses some of the older generation's prejudice towards Catholicism. For example, one seminarista daydreamed that if she could blend the ideal Brasileira, the mixture would combine '...the culture and elegance of the Catholic woman together with the fiery enthusiasm of her Pentecostal counterpart'.<sup>17</sup>

Still, while the younger, more progressive churchwomen raised in Pentecostal homes want to modify the image of Pentecostal femininity

in the Northeast, the majority of the constituency--regardless of age, gender or economic standing--say they do not want to mutate the distinct identity of Pentecostal women into something which will cause them to break from the historical roots of the movement. Consequently, matters of dress and deportment become central issues in preserving a link with the past, and as such, with the establishment and maintenance of the credibility of Pentecostal women in the present era.

## 2. The Pentecostal 'Club': The Dress and Deportment of Women

Assembléia de Deus women are normally easily identifiable on public streets. Both hairstyles and dresses tend to be conservative. Plaits or buns keep long, uncut hair in place for women who have neither time nor money to indulge in salon styling. Simple clothing styles in monochromatic colours make looking clean and neat affordable on a working-class budget. The most conservative women wear outfits comprised of an unadorned white blouse, and a plain dark skirt. The length of womens' skirts is often in itself an identifying mark of the sect. Short skirts are not permitted, as they are considered immodest. However, calf-length or ankle-length skirts are also forbidden, since garb of this length is considered formal evening wear which, to the Pentecostal, symbolizes vanity and sexual allurements. The most strict Assembléias legislate hemlines to fall just below the knee. However, in spite of the obvious severity of such strict stipulations about appearance, Pentecostal women achieve a measure of status due to their adherence to their distinctive dress. Since their clothing identifies them as a noticeable clique within the larger community, Pentecostals can be said to emulate the look of a club.

Numerous clubs exist in Recife and in the other major cities of the Northeast, clubs which support sports teams of every kind, music and culture clubs, or clubs for improvement of health and fitness. Typically, club membership is one indicator of economic transition, a signal that the gap between working class and middle class has been bridged successfully. Since yearly dues vary from moderate-to-expensive and must be paid in advance, only those who are economically established and have at least minimal savings can hope to qualify for membership. As well, belonging to a club symbolizes a superior social lifestyle. While for the working class, life is focused almost exclusively upon meeting daily survival needs, the middle and upper classes have time to indulge in leisure and recreation. Club membership reflects personal independence, 'the good life' and a modicum of prestige.

Pentecostalism capitalizes on the desire of the working class to attain middle-class respectability, stepping into the void at the bottom of the socio-economic pyramid, becoming the working-man's club. The only difference is that this club is based on developing spirituality, rather than fitness or culture, and this club has no prohibitively expensive membership fees.

Dress and deportment is the means whereby a club identity is created and maintained in the eyes of the community. In a country where uniforms are everywhere--as with the supporters of local football sides, the omnipresent legions of young men in military uniform mingling with the population-at-large, or the ornate sashes

of office worn by civic, state and federal officials at formal functions--it is no wonder that Pentecostals have developed a stylized 'uniform' of their own. The very mode of the dress (white shirt and dark pants for men, white blouse and dark skirt for women) mirrors the dress of white-collar workers and middle class businessmen, the people who belong to the sports and culture clubs which working-class individuals aspire to join. In essence, Pentecostalism has successfully employed dress as a means whereby their constituents may identify with socio-economic classes normally beyond their reach. Whereas middle and upper class individuals wear their 'uniform' to the office, working-class Pentecostals wear their 'uniform' to church.

That Pentecostals recognize and support the use of a uniform as a valid identifying mark of both economic and religious status can be seen in the following example. For some months, the *Assembleias de Deus* was embroiled in an on-going conflict with *Bom Preço* grocerias in Recife. Difficulties arose when female Pentecostal adherents who were employed in the company's stores and warehouses were forced to wear trousers at work. Pentecostal pastors refused to sanction this condition of employment for their women, saying that it was shameful for a woman to be clothed in men's apparel.<sup>18</sup> The store managers (indeed, the women themselves) claimed it was more modest for women to dress in trousers than in skirts, since clerks were perched on high stools behind cash registers while tallying customer purchases. The conflict was ultimately resolved by the regional *Assembleia* hierarchy, which concluded that if women wore skirts to and from *Bom Preço* and changed into trousers only for the duration of their work hours, then



Plate 9: Acceptable clothing styles for Congregadas, 1975. (Reproduced with permission from an original photograph by Harold Matson.)



Plate 10: Acceptable clothing styles for Congregadas, 1985.

the trousers could be classified as a uniform, and wearing them would be permissible, in the specified context.<sup>19</sup>

### 3. Women and Discipline

Since maintaining a positive public identity is vital to Pentecostalism, strict discipline is enforced upon women who wish to remain as members in good standing with the movement. Females are censured for even the smallest infractions of unspoken-but-understood rules of dress or behaviour. Cutting one's hair--even trimming an inch or two--is an invitation for public censure. Wearing jewelry, makeup, or shaving one's legs is also generally disapproved by church officials.<sup>20</sup> However, it would appear that many of the younger women (often, the daughters of the church officials themselves) circumvent such edicts on dress and behaviour, by carefully conforming to accepted behaviour on Sundays but wearing makeup and small items of jewelry when attending youth activities during the midweek.

Women who are subjected to church discipline usually have one of two choices: to leave the church for a specified amount of time (usually a period of weeks or months), or if they decide to remain in the church, to refrain from partaking in the sacrament of the eucharist for an even more extended period of time.

There is much discussion, especially among younger crentes, about the stringent rules which Pentecostalism places upon the dress and deportment of females. Young women are becoming bolder in their assertion that rules must not be followed merely out of blind loyalty to the movement. As second or third-generation believers, these youths are willing to adhere to traditional denominational policy, but

want valid reasons for doing so. Occasionally, this attitude of inquiry also finds an echo among older women. Much to my surprise, during an interview with a middle-aged domestica, the woman sighed, leaned toward me, and with deliberate emphasis, intimated in hushed tones that the change she most desired to bring about in the Pentecostal community of Recife was to 'change the emphasis which the churches currently place on the outward appearances of women and get back to a scriptural model of femininity!'.<sup>21</sup> In making this comment, the woman was stressing her belief that the standards of spirituality within the Church's female population ought to be judged not by an external conformity to dress, but by inner moral character.

One pastor contended that he knew of cases where Assembléia women had been disciplined for becoming engaged to marry someone from outside the denomination. The pastor's cryptic comment on the general need for revision of Church practice was '...If I had a church of all the people who have left the Assembléia [over the matter of discipline], I would have a church following which would exceed the denomination's entire nation-wide membership!'<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. Women and Submission

Male dominance is very much the pattern of gender interactions in all of Brazilian life, even in the ranks of evangelical religion. Most Pentecostal women feel this is the way it should be. Indeed, it may be hypothesized that the Pentecostal woman may feel this dominance even more severely than other women, if her husband is also a believer, since he is at home so much more, due to his sober ways. Even wives who are very active in church ministry are expected to

first see to their household and wifely duties before engaging in any religious work. To a Pentecostal woman, submission means the complete forfeiture of selfishness.

As in the home, women's attitudes and responses to authority are carefully monitored in the church. Both professional and lay leaders of the congregation are to maintain a watchful eye over their female constituents. While the pastor sees to it that women are instructed with the theological input necessary to govern their beliefs, presbiteros and deacons observe, evaluate, and seek to enforce the 'correct' behaviour of women.

Since pastors are generally held in high regard by their constituents and are believed to transmit the Word of God through their preaching, they can powerfully influence debate on many controversial issues. When Scripture comments on a subject but does not spell out in exact detail a corresponding behaviour, pastors feel free to extemporize, using their own opinions as a guide to formulating rules which shape the attitudes and personal behaviour of congregational members. In the matter of the deportment of women, pastors have taken wide liberties in defining the notion of submission for their female constituents.

While the biblical text of Ephesians 5 directs women to be submissive to their husbands, Recife preachers often intimate that if women are to be truly feminine, they will willingly submit to the wishes of all males. Consequently, a teenage girl feels she must submit to the demands of a grade-school brother in the home, who disrupts her routine to insist that she mend his clothes or serve him



a meal whenever he demands it. Similarly, in the church, women of all ages--even middle-aged and elderly women--are subjected to constant monitoring by males. This is readily evident in the Sunday School. Although women teach classes at every other level of the Sunday School, it is very rare to find a woman who teaches an adult class, even when the class is composed completely of women. Almost without exception, a man (often the pastor, himself) instructs the adult women's class. Even at the weekly meetings of the female-organized Círculo de Oração, the pastor often preaches or brings a devotional teaching, and in general, keeps watch on the progress of the service. Women are made to feel that in order to please God, they must abide by the whims of men who, in many cases, are younger and less-experienced in life than they are.

Women reject such constraints through some subtle and some not-so-subtle ploys. For example, female behaviour in Sunday School could be construed as a vehicle whereby dissatisfaction with certain male leaders is made plain, and where limited female independence is asserted.<sup>23</sup> During the Sunday School hour at those churches chosen to be part of the field study, I attempted to monitor the interaction of women with their classmates as well as the general attitude of the class members as a whole, as they related to their male instructors. In the open session of the Sunday School, when all ages and classes are present in the sanctuary, women participate with vigour and enthusiasm. There is singing and an opportunity for those who have memorized scripture verses during the past week to stand and be acknowledged before the entire congregation as they repeat the verses

aloud. Small gifts are given to visitors and to those who bring them, as well as to any in the congregation who celebrated birthdays in the preceding week. In all these activities, women participate with delight and good humour. However, at class time, the womens' moods seem to change dramatically. As my observations were made in several different churches, it was not possible to conclude that the womens' pronounced lack of enthusiasm was hinged only to a particular teacher or lesson topic. In fact, when attending other services in these same assemblies, such as the Círculo de Oração--a meeting normally run by and for women--there were twice as many ladies present as in the Sunday School class. Their eagerness for participating in Bible lessons, contributing to class discussions, and even writing down notes for future reference, made their behaviour in Sunday School all the more bewildering.

In Sunday School, women's lack of enthusiasm for learning was demonstrated by actions that often bordered on the hilarious. Depending on the size of the class (inattention grew correspondingly with numbers present), women were variously inattentive (and perhaps deliberately disrespectful) to the instructor by talking loudly to their neighbour during the entire duration of the lesson (one hour), reading aloud word by word from the Sunday School student manual, or ignoring the teacher and gazing absent-mindedly out the window. Also, although at the mid-morning hours when Sunday Schools are conducted, the air temperature in sanctuaries is normally pleasantly cool and even children seem comfortable sitting for extended periods in the pews, many women constantly wander in and out of the sanctuary while

lessons are in progress. In one church, an elderly woman appeared to be paying particularly close attention to the lesson being delivered. I watched with interest, wondering why she was able to focus her mind so intently while others seemingly could or would not. It was difficult to keep from laughing outloud, when in the middle of the lesson, she got up from her pew, walked to the platform, and just behind the instructor's head (precisely where her attention had been so focused) began to adjust and arrange the platform curtains to her liking! Apparently satisfied, she then quietly slipped back into her pew and nodded off to sleep.<sup>24</sup>

These examples of female inattention in male-dominated class sessions might be dismissed as mere boredom or restlessness on the part of the women. However, it seems more logical that in reality these incidents were deliberate acts of silent resentment and resistance undertaken by women who reject the notion that young and unordained male leaders are sufficient to be the sole spiritual mentors of females. In several subsequent services, I witnessed direct, overt and aggressive resistance to male dominance in church gatherings. Interestingly, in at least three incidents, I observed females working together to frustrate, impede or foil the plan of particularly disliked male leaders.

One incident took place at a mid-week prayer service, one of the most interesting meetings in the Pentecostal weekly schedule. In the prayer service, the liturgy is less structured than on a Sunday, and there is more opportunity for the involvement of the laity in the actual leadership of the service. Spontaneity and creativity seem to

be more appreciated in this service than in any other. However, this also means that there is correspondingly greater potential for abuses of the additional freedom. During one mid-week service, several male leaders tried to end a lengthy exhortation being delivered to the congregation by a particularly long-winded 'Brother'. Although the man was cautioned several times, he gave no sign of stopping his tirade, and it was obvious that the male leaders of the meeting had exhausted their store of ideas of what to do. However, the women of the congregation knew precisely what to do. Slowly and softly at first, and then louder and more quickly, one voice after another from the women's side of the auditorium began to join in singing a chorus from a popular hymn. Finally, all the women (and some of the men) were singing loudly, forcing the gentleman behind the pulpit to make a choice: either to join the congregation in song, or else, yield his place at the lecturn. For a time, he sang along with the crowd, but finally had to retire from his attempt at preaching, when the women launched into a new song, unabated when he waved his arms, motioning for quiet, attempting to renew his speech.<sup>25</sup> On two other occasions I witnessed women employing a similar strategy to foil the efforts of speakers of whom they disapproved. However, never did I see a female speaker 'shouted down' by the congregation in this fashion.

The aforementioned incident gives some insight into one of the more curious traits exhibited by women in the Recife churches. Although individually they categorically deny any premeditated attempt to control the mood or tempo of a service, it is apparent that women have learned that they have genuine power to alter the prearrangement

of a meeting through actions carried out in group solidarity. This is undoubtedly one reason why women proliferate in Pentecostal churches. It is one institution of society where female influence is immediate and effective, and where by sheer numbers, women can control their opposite gender. As individuals, Pentecostal women by and large readily submit to the direction of their pastor. However, if variables in the interpersonal equation change--as when individual women form into groups, or when the authority figure placed in leadership over them is not a pastor but a lay leader with delegated power--women are more cautious in their response and far more considered in extending their unreserved allegiance to a man. The female pattern has been to carefully observe whether the male leader of secondary authority is worthy of willing submission, then tailor their response accordingly.

##### 5. Female Fidelity to the Institution

Most female card-carrying members of the Assembléia find their primary identity within the church. In every case without exception, the women who were involved in the statistical count and who were interviewed as a part of the research design attended church meetings a minimum of three times weekly. In fact, it was common for women to attend services five or more times, weekly. Fully one-third of the Pentecostal women whom I polled were involved in church services or church-sponsored activities (visitation, evangelism) seven days a week.<sup>26</sup>

C. Programmes, Policy-making and the Public role of Women in the Church

1. The Assembléia de Deus National Conference statement on Women

That women individually and collectively have made a significant impact on the Brazilian Pentecostal movement starting immediately from its inception in Belém in 1911 is evidenced in the fact that one of only four agenda items discussed at the 1930 inaugural national convention of the Assembléia de Deus was the work of women in the church.<sup>27</sup>

The principal debate concerned the extent to which women should be permitted leadership within the local church context. While acknowledging and lauding the work of pioneer women evangelists and missionaries, conservatives within the Assembléia membership raised the issue of an absence of Biblical precedents for women holding the post of pastor within church congregations. The conference declared its support for female participation in all avenues of church service, save the office of pastor-teacher. The conference resolution reads:

The Sisters have full rights to participate in evangelistic work, testifying of Jesus and His salvation, and may also teach, when necessary. But it is not considered correct that a Sister have the function of pastor of a church or of teacher except in exceptional cases, such as that mentioned in Matthew 12:3-8. Thus it must be [that women may serve in these capacities] only when there are no Brothers in the church with the capacity to pastor or teach.<sup>28</sup>

The scripture passage named in the conference resolution speaks of King David's actions in eating sacred bread from the temple of God, even though this was a privilege accorded priests alone. However, the mitigating factor in this incident was that David had fled for his life at a moment's notice, and had no provisions for himself or his

accompanying military guard. Since his actions in contravening established religious ritual were motivated by necessity and a desire to help others--David took only what was deemed survival rations--he was not judged by God for violating temple procedures.<sup>29</sup> Presumably, the Assembléia conference extrapolated a rule of practice from this biblical example. Where genuine need exists, and where motivation to loving service is paramount, then mere convention and formality may be overlooked in light of the greater responsibility of fulfilling one's duty to God. Therefore, if there are no other likely candidates for congregational leadership, then women may hold the office of pastor or teacher, with the full endorsement of the Assembléia.

Just how liberal and 'enlightened' a viewpoint this was in the 1930s--and continues to be, in the 1990s--is clearly seen in a comparison between the Pentecostal conference statement and the views expressed by the Convenção Batista Brasileira, the Assembléia de Deus' closest competitor in terms of evangelical Church membership both in the city of Recife and throughout the Northeastern states.

The Baptists claim, through their spokesman, Tácito da Gama Leite Filho (a former student at the Seminário Teológico Batista do Norte do Brasil, in Recife) that

If other countries and other evangelical denominations permit female pastors, why import and imitate their custom? Women pastors are the fruit of secular movements that are influencing [our] theology...A woman can be a director of religious education or a director of music in the church. But she cannot exercise the specific function of the pastor, the leader of the church. Only a man possesses the physical, mental and emotional conditions necessary for attending to all the exigencies of a pastor.<sup>30</sup>

He further adds:

Women must never forget the fact that the first woman was formed after the man and sinned before he did.<sup>31</sup>

In strident contrast to the Baptist viewpoint, modern Pentecostal leadership holds firmly to the Assembléia de Deus' original declaration on the participation of women in the church, which sees a legitimate 'loophole' permitting the possibility of female pastors. While in an official business session, the members of the Northeastern Regional Presbytery of the MOPB affirmed that on the basis of scripture alone, female pastors could not be completely forbidden. In establishing this position, MOPB presbyters followed the leadership of their presbytery chairman and district superintendent, a middle-aged Brazilian. The superintendent noted that with the exception of the book of Ephesians, all New Testament epistles were written to specific audiences and in response to case-specific questions facing church congregations in locales dotted throughout the ancient Roman empire. Consequently, he asserted that no dogma on the role of women could be appropriated and applied in a all-encompassing sense from New Testament epistles other than Ephesians. Any 'universal' dogma about the role of women would have to come from this book alone. The superintendent concluded that since in the text of Ephesians there are no prohibitions barring female pastors, the possibility of such an office must, of necessity, exist.<sup>32</sup>

That Pentecostal women have been permitted to become pastors, and have discharged their duties effectively is ably demonstrated, historically, through the lives of Celina de Albuquerque, Maria Jose de Melo, and others. On occasion, Pentecostal churches have



commissioned women as pastors, with the specific intent that they be deployed as church planters in areas of the frontier where there has not yet been an organized Pentecostal church, and where the local population is judged to be less hostile and suspicious toward female (as opposed to male) newcomers. Churches in Recife particularly exploit this strategy of church planting. The Assembléia de Deus (and smaller groups who pattern themselves after the Assembléia) have made a practice of periodically sending pairs of female school teachers into the sertão, where they seek to establish schools in needy communities. Once their school is operating and the women teachers have gained a modicum of social acceptance in the community through their involvement with children and youth, they begin to develop a Sunday School or church congregation, utilizing inter-personal contacts they have gained through school-related networking. Once the church demonstrates consistent growth, a message is relayed to the mother church in Recife. The Recife church then selects a husband and wife from their midst, who are asked to consider moving to the interior locale in order to take over the reins of church leadership from the female pastor-teachers. Alternately, new converts from the local assembly may be groomed for the pastorate, although due to their immaturity in the faith, this is not always deemed to be preferable. Pastor's wives or local townspeople are trained to take over the instructional and administrative duties of the school. When the transfer of responsibility is complete, the pioneering female teachers move further into the interior and begin to establish a second school,

and so on. This strategy for church growth has been repeated on several occasions and in numerous locales in the Northeast.<sup>33</sup>

## 2. Albertina Borrito and the 'Círculo de Oração'

The prominent role given to the working of miracles and to the doctrine of divine healing in Pentecostal circles has given rise to what is today one of the most significant of all lay-inspired contributions to the Brazilian evangelical church. Indeed, pastors and congregational members from the Igreja Evangelho Quadrangular, the Convenção Batista Brasileira, the Missão Evangélica and the Assembléias de Deus all attest to the significance of the Círculo de Oração (Circle of Prayer) with its Pentecostal working-class origins as the key element in establishing women's ministries as a nationwide interdenominational movement.<sup>34</sup> Essentially, the Círculo de Oração evolved from the concerns of a small group of Recife women who endeavoured to seek for spiritual answers to practical problems in their lives.

### a. History of the Círculo de Oração

In early 1942, Albertina Borrito, a poor and uneducated but devout member of the Assembléia de Deus in the Recife neighbourhood of Casa Amarela, gave birth to a mongoloid daughter. For several weeks, women of the church regularly visited in the Borrito home to pray for the mother and her child. On March 6, 1942, nine women pledged to join in regular weekly prayer with Albertina and each other, until such time as the Borrito daughter received healing.<sup>35</sup>

Month after month, the women met together. There was no change in the condition of the baby, but the women discovered a special sense

of solidarity in gathering to share common concerns about their respective families. Although the initial concern for Albertina's daughter continued to be a focal point of intercession, prayers were also broadened to include others in the group who had special needs. Many individuals received answers to prayer, and the women of the Círculo de Oração were thereby encouraged to believe that the humble beginnings of their informal meetings might merely be forshadowing greater things to come. More and more women from working-class neighbourhoods and the favelas bordering Casa Amarela began to attend Círculo meetings. By the end of 1942, the pastor of the Casa Amarela Assembléia de Deus had given his official sanction and support to the popular gatherings, and the Círculo de Oração found its niche in the on-going programme of the church. Under the guidance of the church board, an organizational infrastructure for the Círculo was established, one which also guaranteed direct female representation to the leadership of the local assembly.

Soon after the initial establishment of a prayer circle in the Casa Amarela congregation, a second Círculo de Oração was formed, this time in the Igreja-matriz of the Recife Assembléia de Deus. Here, the Círculo was organized and led by Swedish missionary Signe Carlson. She, together with her husband Joel, had been among the first to bring the Pentecostal message from Belém to Pernambuco, in 1918. With such a powerful ally standing in support for the newly-developing evangelical women's movement, the fledgling programme flourished. Gaining the backing of a respected woman with a history of ministerial service in the city enhanced both the validity and credibility of the Círculo.

Little did Albertina Borrito realize that in forming her prayer circle in 1942, she had lit a spark to dry tinder. With the added support of the Assembléia igreja-matriz solidly behind the Círculo, prayer groups began forming in several branch congregations throughout the city. The founding of Círculos in the Assembléia de Deus in Recife began to grow at a rate of more than three new chapters each year, a pace consistently maintained since its inception up to and including the present time. By 1980, there were over one hundred and twenty Círculos in operation in the Recife Assembléias alone. While most groups currently average upward of one hundred in attendance, the igreja-matriz, Cruz Cabugá, now registers over five hundred women on their role.<sup>36</sup>

The Assembléia de Deus began publication of a national magazine entitled Círculo de Oração in 1982, to coincide with the fortieth anniversary of the prayer movement. Two years later, in 1984, Albertina's daughter died. Her life of forty-two years--an unusually long life, considering her unfavourable early prognosis--was in itself regarded as an act of divine grace. Women of the Assembléias believe that God used Albertina's handicapped daughter to be the catalyst motivating an entire generation of Brazilian women to active evangelistic and social service.

Albertina Borrito was still living in the bairro of Casa Amarela in 1985. Without question, her 'Circle of Prayer' has become the most visible ongoing legacy which the working-class first-generation Pentecostal women in Recife have passed on to their Nordestino 'sisters' of the present generation.

b. The Work and Increasing Influence of the Movement

Over the years, the Círculo de Oração has maintained a purposeful commitment to prayer as the foundation of local assemblies, while at the same time expanding its mandate to include active service in other sectors within the church community. Most Pentecostal women give a minimum of one full day each week to the work of Círculo projects; many give even more time and effort to the program. Círculo women visit the sick and often hold informal meetings in the homes of church members or adherents who live in neighbourhoods adjacent to the assembly. Fundraising for major church projects or building extensions is often tied to mobilizing Círculo de Oração members who faithfully organize money-drives through visitation programmes, church festas, or friendly intra-church offering competitions.

Widows can find a special identity by working in the Círculo, often becoming relatively powerful in the women's ranks of their church. Since the Círculo is the one programme of Pentecostal churches run specifically by and for women, it is relatively free of male control. Elderly women in the movement are regarded with genuine respect, and often function as if they themselves were pastors to the younger women in the group. Skill-sharing, information on health and hygiene, tips on childcare, Bible teaching and some literacy training are all latent benefits derived from the mutual support system established by the networking of women within the Círculo, as older or more experienced women advise and help guide their younger counterparts through the vicissitudes of life.

The influence and effect of the Círculo de Oração has extended far beyond Recife or even Pernambuco. In the 1990s, virtually every state in the nation has scores of Círculo groups. As well, the transplanting of the Círculo across denominational lines has insured that the movement does not flourish or flounder on the fortunes of one denomination alone. The concept of the Círculo has been adopted wholesale from the Assembleias de Deus by the Igreja Batista Renovada (Reformed Baptists), the Igreja Evangelho Quadrangular (International Church of the Foursquare Gospel), and the Igreja da Fé (Church of Faith) as a model for female participation in the congregations of their respective denominations.

In evaluating the relative ability of the Círculo to effect significant social change--whether intentionally or unintentionally--it is possible to make some interesting parallels between the Church and society. The Círculo de Oração is to the Brazilian ecclesiastical sphere what unions are to the nation's economic sphere. Círculos present the concerns and represent the collective will of a vital and vocal special-interest group (working-class women), within a larger social constituency (the male-dominated and controlled higher echelons of the Brazilian evangelical church). Further, Círculos are important lobbying groups within local assemblies, especially since female religious adherents normally outnumber their male counterparts in the majority of Brazilian evangelical churches. In this one respect alone--that their membership works tirelessly to strengthen the position of an otherwise silent majority--Círculos operate not unlike the international feminist movement. Brazilian Pentecostal women

might well reject this comparison, as they oppose the radical political agenda of North American and European feminists. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Círculos play their part in assisting female access to information, attention, and real decision-making in that social institution which has, traditionally, been most resistant to change. As the Church represents one of the last bastions of male power in the cultural framework of most Latin American nations, then assuredly, Brazilian Pentecostal women are taking their position on the front lines, storming the gates of a heretofore male-dominated cultural infrastructure. As the catalyst that has unified working-class women of all denominations around one central idea--the notion that they, through joint intercession and action can alter an otherwise dismal reality in personal, family and even societal circumstances--the Círculo de Oração has imbued women with both a more positive self-image and a sense of spiritual, if not actual, power.

### 3. 'As Estrangeiras': The Influence of Foreign Missionary Women in the development of Brazilian Pentecostalism

The life and influence of Frida Vingren, the earliest and perhaps the most influential of the foreign missionary women has already been discussed at length. However, many other women followed in Vingren's wake, as career ministers or minister's wives to Northeastern Brazil. Not all of these individuals were accorded the same degree of influence as Frida. Still, by virtue of the content of their public teaching and the conduct of their private lives, missionary women as a group have influenced successive generations of wives, mothers, and

churchworkers to pattern their lives along certain prescribed lines. While missionary women are far from uniform in their style of ministry and do not claim to have produced a standardized 'model' of femininity for adoption by the Brazilian constituency, 'as estrangeiras' have been historically--and continue to be--a significant and dynamic variable in defining and refining the female equation in the church and ministry formulae of Brazilian Pentecostalism.

#### a. Benefits of the Missionary Presence

To begin with, the missionaries' very foreignness has been of real value to Northeastern churches. Foreignness has been exploitable by the churches for their own advantage, as when estrangeiras are used in an advisory role, to assist the Brazilian Church in the formation of religious education curricula and in the development of women's, youths' and children's programming. Brazilian women contend that foreignness need be no great problem if the missionary knows what role the Brazilian Church expects her to fill. As long as missionary women assist their Brazilian counterparts and do not attempt to lead in a domineering manner or usurp another's position, then their contributions are generally welcomed and indeed, often eagerly sought. One female church leader confided that she considered missionary women to be genuine friends. Her endorsement of their worth was simple and straightforward: 'Since my sisters [in the faith] have been raised in a culture vastly different from that of Brazil, they often can look at a situation [here] with more objectivity than I can.'<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, it seems apparent that the interaction of missionary women with women of the Brazilian working-class has acted as a catalyst for



conscientização (consciousness-raising) in the lives of many. Estrangeiras who serve the local churches of the Northeast have brought a different perspective into the lives of working-class Brasileiras, simply by introducing to them new ways of perceiving the world, and sharing ideas from a different cultural experience which translate into innovative ideas for problem-solving in life.

b. Latent results of the missionary presence: socio-economic advancement

Although much of the work of foreign missionary women in Recife and the surrounding environs has advanced and strengthened the presence of the Church in Northeastern society, valid criticisms may still be put forward in examination and evaluation of their work. One accusation which in fairness must be levied against some foreign missionary women working in Brazil has been that their own backgrounds in Europe or America have pre-disposed them to unconsciously develop middle-class religious structures and programmes for working-class believers. This criticism is at least partly true of missionary intervention in the Northeast. In the externals of dress and mode of behaviour, female foreign missionaries have transferred many of their own cultural standards wholesale. For example, the residual influence of older female missionaries in establishing an 'appropriate' dress code for female converts is readily seen in the kind of attire that is still most commonly worn by women at Sunday services. Furthermore, missionary women have historically often introduced their own middle-class values in morality and propriety to Pentecostal congregations,

and then were shocked and disappointed when the Nordestino working-class did not live up to such arbitrary extra-biblical standards.

Having acknowledged that some missionary intervention into the lives of Brazilian women has contributed to acts of foreign interference, it must also be noted that in the matter of Church organization and Church government, there has been little visible meddling. That this has been avoided in the Northeast is proven in the fact that local Pentecostal assemblies survive by means of the financial giving of their own membership, maintain or construct their own buildings, and pay their own pastors a living wage. Some congregations even support evangelical welfare institutions.<sup>38</sup> All these facets of Church operation have been maintained, even in depressed years.

While the ability of the Church to do these things demonstrates that missionary input is not necessary to maintain the institution, at the same time it also suggests that missionaries have been very successful in transferring many of the characteristics of their middle-class mindset into the modal personality of working-class Brasileiras. The effective modification of values is particularly evidenced in the social dynamics related to adopting such middle-class values as efficiency in the use of time, thrift, and education. Specifically, it is the desire and ability to plan for the future which most clearly demonstrates how working-class individuals experience a slow shift in their conceptual framework, following conversion to Pentecostalism.

The vast majority of Recife's working-class community live from day to day, thinking only of the present. For a middle-class person this is not indicative of a relaxed attitude toward life, but rather, indicates moral irresponsibility toward the future. What the working-class female convert discovers is that as a result of her new-found faith, she begins to be more honest, sober, and is usually considered a better worker. She desires to read the Scriptures, and takes steps to learn. Her own new motivation to work and to learn is usually projected to her children. In order that they may have the education which she failed to get, she does something which she has not been able to do previously--she begins to plan. In taking this step, the working-class woman begins to think as a middle-class person, that is, like an estrangeira. Most likely, her children will find their niche in the middle-class, and, ironically, may find that their lives may be bound by the very virtues that brought their mother out of the poverty and distress of her former life.

ENDNOTES: PENTECOSTAL PRACTICE: WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

- 1 Helen Brandão, Minha Experiência Com Os Espíritos (Rio de Janeiro, 1985), p. 11. My translation. Brandão has frequently used her access to the entertainment community as an opportunity for evangelism. For example, she was instrumental in the conversion of a well-known telenovela actress, Marta Anderson.
- 2 Though Pentecostals are not pacifists, they do not favour the military as a career for their sons. The fear of being criticized for adopting a lifestyle which may compromise Christian conviction is a strong deterrent to would-be soldiers. However, completing the obligatory national army service during one's late teenage years is considered to be honouring the biblical command to 'submit...to the governing authorities' (Romans 13.1). As well, the brief time spent in training and comradery with males from all walks of life is considered to be a means whereby boys are forged into men.
- 3 Judith Hoffnagel, 'The Believers: Pentecostalism in a Brazilian City' (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1978), p. 171.
- 4 My field study samples showed, for example, that women outnumbered men 1.72 to 1 in the Campo Grande assembly, by 2.36 to 1 in the Casa Amarela Sunday School. In midweek prayer meetings in Campo Grande and Cruz Cabugá, it was not uncommon for women to outnumber men by nearly 4 to 1.
- 5 Matthew 8.13.
- 6 Infant mortality per thousand live births is 90-100, and life expectancy at birth is 63.4 years. Anuário Estatístico do Brasil 1981 (Rio de Janeiro, 1981).
- 7 Interview with 'Irma Severina', Converted Spiritist (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 27 June 1985.
- 8 Interview with 'Irma Raimunda' (Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá), 27 June 1985.
- 9 Interview with 'Irma Rita' (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 27 June 1985.
- 10 Interview with Maria Moura (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 4 July 1985. Maria Moura's healing occurred November 16, 1960. Twenty-five years later, Maria Moura is still active in the congregation where she made her profession of faith. Maria is now the president of the assembly's women's group, and she has become the first female deacon in the church's history.

- 11 Interview with Abraão Benedito de Souza (Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá, 5 August 1985.
- 12 Interview with Maria Iris Lima (Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá, 5 August 1985.
- 13 Luke 1.37; Mark 16.17-18.
- 14 Interview with 'Irma Teresa' (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 1 July 1985.
- 15 1 Corinthians 4.20.
- 16 Interviews with Lenilda Nunes Coriolano Guimarães (STPN graduate and Seminary employee; Pastor's wife, Missão Evangélica), 13 June 1985; Maria Moura (President of Círculo de Oração, Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 27 June 1985; 'Irma Teresa' (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 1 July 1985; Luiza e Tuo da Silva (Círculo de Oração, Assembléia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá), 8 August 1985.
- 17 Interview with Risalva Maria Barros da Silva (Christian Education Director, Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela), 10 June 1985.
- 18 Pastors often quote from Deuteronomy 22.5: 'A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this'.
- 19 Interview with Judith Hoffnagel (Department of History, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, Boa Viagem, Recife), 8 August 1985.
- 20 Interview with Laura Fodor (Professor, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste, Encruzilhada), 28 June 1985. Interview with Beth Brooks (Igreja da Fé, Afogados; ADHONOR Youth, Recife), 15 June 1985.
- 21 Interview with 'Irma Teresa' (Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande), 4 July 1985.
- 22 Interview with Pastor Moises Francisco de Oliveira (Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela), 7 June 1985.
- 23 It may be theorized that women consciously or unconsciously chose to use the Sunday School as their forum for discontent because they could 'make a statement' without causing major dissention in the larger congregation. Sunday Schools are the least active organization of Pentecostal congregations in Brazil. Likely, their low priority can be attributed to the influence of Vingren, Berg, and the other Swedes who pioneered many congregations during the founding decade of the movement. Sweden, like her neighbouring European countries (with the exception of Britain) tended to be less Sunday-school oriented than North-America.

- 24 Observations at Assembleia de Deus, Santo Amaro, 30 June 1985; Igreja da Fé, Afogados, 15 June 1985; Igreja Batista Emanuel, Boa Viagem, 16 and 30 June, 1985; Missão Evangelica, Casa Amarela, June 2 and 9, 1985.
- 25 Observations at Assembleia de Deus, Cruz Cabuga, Recife, 25 July and 1 August 1985.
- 26 Where in other commentaries on South American Pentecostalism the measure of female fidelity to church attendance and the participation of individuals in meetings has been carefully observed and recorded, it is interesting to note that although the research data were obtained in completely disparate circumstances and locales, the same findings--an extremely high commitment level of women to the church--is the confirmed generalization of each study. In Hoffnagel's study among Assembleia de Deus membership (Brazil, 1978), fifty-three percent of Pentecostal women attended services five times a week or more. Flora's work, conducted primarily with the Igreja Pentecostal Unida (Colombia) discovered that fully sixty-eight percent of the Pentecostal women surveyed in one urban neighbourhood in Bogota attended religious activities five or six times a week, compared to only three percent for Catholic women living in the same barrio. See Flora, *Journal of Interamerican Studies* 17:4, Nov. 1975, 411-425, p.418; Hoffnagel, 1978:173.
- 27 The conference convened in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, from September 5-10. The other three agenda items were: the receiving of reports of ongoing missionary endeavours throughout the North and Northeast; a discussion on defining new directions for future Pentecostal growth in the region; and the suspension of publication of two existing Pentecostal journals (one published in Pará and the other in Rio) and the creation of a new journal: *O Mensageiro da Paz*, to be published in Rio de Janeiro and distributed to Pentecostal believers across the nation.
- 28 Article 4, 'Resoluções da Primeira Convenção Geral das Assembleias de Deus' (Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, 1930). My translation.
- 29 The complete narrative of David's episode at the temple is recorded in 1 Samuel 21. 1-6.
- 30 Tácito de Gama Leite Filho, *A Mulher Cristã e Seu Ministério* (Belo Horizonte, 1979), pp. 39, 2. My translation.
- 31 Ibid., p. 14.
- 32 These remarks were made at the Sessão da Comissão Executiva do Supremo Concílio da Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil (Natal, Rio Grande do Norte), 10 August 1985.

- 33 Examples of how the system works can be seen in the on-going ministry of numerous graduates of Recife's Seminário de Educadoras Cristãs (S.E.C.). Zulmira Andrade was dispatched to the interior of Bahia, to the town of Ibotirama. There, in March 1957, she started a primary school. Three years later, Zulmira had organized a church congregation. In July 1960, 'the congregation that Zulmira built' set about constructing their own meeting hall. Zulmira remained for ten years in Ibotirama, during which time, over 150 students graduated from the school she founded.

Angelina Pereira Leitão, of Ribeirão, Pernambuco, was twenty-three years of age when she graduated from S.E.C. in 1963. Immediately, she entered missionary work. At Tocantinópolis, Angelina organized a religious literature society, a library, a health club, and an orphanage. In one year, she saw fourteen of her school students convert to evangelicalism.

Interview with Carolyn Goodman Plampin (Academic Dean, Seminário de Educadoras Cristãs, Recife), July 16, 1985; Interview with Manoel Soares Filho (National Superintendent of the Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil, Natal, Rio Grande do Norte), August 10, 1985; See also Mildred Cox Mein, Casa Formosa (Recife, 1966)

- 34 The importance of the Círculo de Oração was repeatedly borne out in field studies among a variety of church leaders and laity. Some of the Círculo's most ardent supporters were: Moises Francisco de Oliveira, pastor of the Missão Evangélica Igreja-matriz in Casa Amarela, Recife (Interviews: June 7, July 8, 17, 1985); Audrey Swicgood, Northeast regional director of the União Feminina Missionária Batista do Brasil, Convenção Batista Brasileira, Recife (Interviews: July 8, 12, 1985); Laura Fodor, Instructor, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste, Encruzilhada, Recife (Interview: June 24, 1985); Luiza e Tuo da Silva, President of the Círculo de Oração of Cruz Cabugi, the Igreja-matriz of the Assembleia de Deus in Recife (Interview: August 8, 1985); and Heather Chaloner, nurse and English-language instructor, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste, Encruzilhada, Recife (Interviews: June 20, July 30, 1985).

- 35 Interview with Luiza e Tuo da Silva, August 8, 1985.

- 36 Luiza e Tuo da Silva, August 8, 1985.

- 37 Interview with Fátima Monteiro (National President of the União Feminina, Missão Evangélica, João Pessoa, Paraíba), 29 June 1985.

- 38 Some churches have a special Benevolence Fund offering, received once monthly, usually at the conclusion of the Santa Ceia. Monies in the fund are regularly distributed to needy families in the church, or to those in need in local favelas.

VII. PENTECOSTAL PRACTICE AND THE COMMUNITY:  
FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION AND THE SOCIALIZATION OF WOMEN

A. Pentecostalism and Formal Education

1. Early efforts in education: the establishment of church schools

From colonial times until the present, educational opportunity in Recife has been the preserve of the male elite. The pride of the city, indeed of the entire Northeast, has been Recife's Faculdade de Direito, founded by order of the Imperial court in 1827, and one of the only two schools of law in Brazil until 1891. In spite of the notable contribution made to regional education at a post-secondary level by the Faculdade, the primary-level schooling of Recifenses has always been sadly lacking.

At the turn of the century, only the offspring of wealthy Recifenses had access to formal education. Even after 1900, the state rarely allocated any more than 1.6 percent of its revenues per capita (or five percent of its budget) to public education, the smallest proportion in the whole country. A decade into the twentieth century, still only ninety-two school-aged children in one thousand attended school in Pernambuco, compared with a national average of one hundred and thirty-seven.<sup>1</sup> Pentecostalism entered into an environment of virtual deprivation in education for working-class females, when the first evangelists of the movement arrived in Recife, in 1916.

In the face of unemployment and intense poverty, Recife's working-class families could not afford to pay to send their sons--much less their daughters--to state-run schools. Thus, the harsh



Northeastern realidade afforded Pentecostalism the opportunity to offer the working class something it valued, but could not afford: education for its children. Through the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, numerous *Assembléias de Deus* in the Recife area operated primary schools. Since these schools were few in number and small in size, they were able to survive, largely unnoticed and unhindered by the Catholic majority.<sup>2</sup> Normally, the schools were housed in the premises of the local church meeting halls, but occasionally, classes were held in the homes of congregational members. These church schools served to provide a rudimentary education for the children of Pentecostals, and were also used as an evangelistic tool, to establish links to families in the city's working-class neighbourhoods.

Although general public sentiment was not favourable to a full-fledged support of the Pentecostal sect at the time of its initial introduction into Recife, modernization and Americanization had at that time gained great popularity with the middle and upper-class of the city. Therefore, many working-class parents permitted their children to attend Pentecostal church schools, considering that the opportunity to develop literacy skills and to gain knowledge about many Western ways of life was worth the risk of exposing them to Protestant fundamentalism. To the working-class parent, differences in religious philosophy were negotiable. Although Bible classes were part of the regular Pentecostal curriculum, parents allowed this concession in light of the overall diversity of the school programme.

On the surface, the aims of early Pentecostal church schools seemed modest, particularly where girls were concerned. As

conservative evangelicals, teachers were hardly revolutionary; the kinds of values they sought to transmit to their female students were purity, truth, faithfulness to high ideals of womanhood, docility and neatness. Instructors' foremost intentions were to teach girls morals, hygiene, and domestic knowledge. Their goals were to turn their charges into good housekeepers, good mothers, and good wives. Although schools of other denominations may have had more ambitious aims and more sophisticated approaches, it is fair to say that the basic education, practical training and moral guidance which pervaded the curricula of Pentecostal church schools in the early decades of this century left a significant impact upon Recife working-class young women.

Just as missionary women had a hand in influencing the particular dress and deportment which later came to typify the 'style' of Pentecostal Brasileiras, so missionaries likewise exercised a latent influence in the sphere of female education. Missionary wives often worked alongside Brazilian evangelistas in classroom instruction. While the foreigners embraced the same overall objective as their Brazilian co-workers, that of the call to spread Pentecostal Christian belief, the goals of missionary women were defined in the ideology of feminism, a feminism much milder than that expressed in radical circles in America, but feminism nonetheless. Their expectations regarding the necessary end of Protestant missionizing often included the notion of the necessity of radical societal transformation. That this is so is evidenced in the correspondence of missionary women, which was circulated among congregations in North America and Europe

during early mission endeavours.<sup>3</sup> Their letters were not usually theological tracts about evangelism, they were largely listings of the innumerable social problems which existed in Brazil. Following the pattern of social reform which had been historically a large part of the activity of female leaders in the Protestant Western world, missionary women accepted the challenge of working to alleviate social ills through their activities in the developing world. Male missionaries had a mandate 'to convert the heathen'. Wives and mothers, by their presence and example, were to be agents of social change.

Although the premises of Pentecostal church schools were often small and unspectacular, and while their students set no armies marching and toppled no regimes, the ideological content of the instruction given to the children of the Recife working class introduced new concepts that struck at the heart of their culture. Protestant philosophies could not help challenging prevailing social norms. The goals of the Pentecostal church schools which had appeared not to be controversial were, in fact, truly revolutionary, though they were not always understood as such by the evangelistas and missionary teachers themselves. The very notion that females possessed an inherent right to education touched a nerve ending in traditional Northeastern society. The residual effects of Pentecostal efforts in education were to establish in their adherents the desire for the granting of women's free and open access to advancement at all levels of formal learning, including advanced education.

## 2. O Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste

In each successive decade since the 1920s, Recife Pentecostals have improved their educational training programmes for women. In 1963, the Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste was established, to serve as a ministerial training college not only for Recife and Pernambuco, but for all the Northeastern states. The seminary offers both a three year diploma course and a four year degree program. Nearly half of its present student body is female.

From its inception, the seminary has been a boarding school. Classes and dormitories were first located in a rented house, but steady increases in enrollment precipitated the construction of a complex designed specifically for the use of the seminary. With the dedication of its new facility in 1976, the Seminário has established a strong presence in the bairro of Encruzilhada. The main floor of the two-storey structure houses offices, classrooms, a kitchen and a dining room. The upper storey is made up of dormitories, one half for men and the other half for women.

Although the Seminário conducts some classes during the day, the majority of its courses are offered in evenings, a necessary accommodation to the daily schedule of its working-class constituency. Many of the seminary students work in informal sector employment, or are self-employed. Several students work as maids or caretakers in Recife's middle and upper class neighbourhoods. Since most students are not free to leave their jobs until the early evening hours, classes are scheduled accordingly.



Plate 11: Evangelism Team, O Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste (STPN), 1974. (Reprinted with permission from an original photograph by Harold Matson.)



Plate 12: Evangelism Teams (STPN). (Ibid.)



Plate 13: Suitcase-manufacturing and Typing Classes (STPN). (Ibid.)



Plate 14: Shoe-Making (STPN). (Ibid.)

Besides its unusual timetable, this learning institution is unique in that in addition to providing instruction in religious subjects, the Seminário gives training in many other fields. Practical work and ministry go hand in hand with the theoretical. As it is necessary for the students to partially support themselves, there has developed in association with the school a number of activities such as shoe-making, carpentry, furniture repair, typing, designing and dress-making, embroidery, leather and plastics work and many similar practical and profitable enterprises. Students are taught skills which will enable them to be self-employed in a secular field, so that if, in future, they are thrust into evangelistic or pastoral work in some distinct locale, their ministry will be self-sustaining.

#### B. Pentecostalism and Informal Education

Through the development of educational institutions both at primary and advanced levels of formal learning, Pentecostalism has served as an important educating force for working-class Recifeans. In informal education, Pentecostalism has been even more effective, socializing and educating not just a select few, but the majority of its constituency, through the mechanisms of preaching and teaching in the larger church community during regular weekly services. In many aspects of its liturgy and preaching, Pernambucan Pentecostalism borrows heavily from the poetic style and thematic content of the popular literary tradition of the region, the literatura de cordel. It may be hypothesized that one reason for the rapid growth of Pentecostalism among the Recife working class has been due to its

affinity with the literatura de cordel, this uniquely Northeastern oral artistic genre.<sup>4</sup>

#### 1. The Background of the Literatura de Cordel in Recife

Literatura de cordel has traditionally had a significant educational function in the life of the Recife working class. These stories-in-verse sold at open air markets and fairs are the principal reading matter of poor and semi-literate Northeasterners. The educational benefit of the literatura de cordel rests in its ability to function in a variety of forms. Cordels recount history and folklore, paraphrase the great stories of classic literature, and reproduce shortened forms of episodes from the Gospels. These poems aid in the dissemination of information on health or politics, preserve and pass on folktales and teach morality from the standpoint of the laity.

Originally, the term literatura de cordel was a Portuguese rather than a Brazilian expression.<sup>5</sup> In most regions of Brazil, popular poets call their cordel booklets folhetos ('pamphlets'), but in the Northeast they are often called arrecifes, testimony to Recife's important role in the evolution of the cordel. For well over a hundred and fifty years, folhetos have been developing into a uniquely northeastern literature. In the early nineteenth century northeastern poet-singers created a fusion between oral poetry, folk tales and the art of verbal dueling. Though the minstrel heritage is also apparent in Spanish America, only in Brazil has there been the development of the desafio ('challenge') or peleja ('contest'; 'battle').<sup>6</sup>



Since all stories are written in poetry, the attraction of the literatura de cordel lies mainly in its oral performance. A good folheto salesman must not only have a head for business, but the abilities of a dramatic actor as well. Folheto salesmen who are also poet-improvisers are known as repentistas. Repentista is derived from the noun repente, which means 'burst' or 'gust'. This underscores the importance of quick-witted responses in the verbal duels which ensue between rival poets. Repentistas are famous throughout the Northeast for their on-the-spot compositions and for spirited exchanges with competing folheto sellers. Unlike a poeta de bancada (bancada means 'bench' and refers to the act of sitting down to write), repentistas specialize in verbal improvisation and often may be illiterate.

The poetic contest of the peleja may go on for several hours or even several days. Two repentistas entertain crowds of passersby in public markets or in city-center plazas by re-telling folktales, discussing a current event, or simply throwing good-natured banter back and forth in the prescribed poetic form.<sup>7</sup> The object of the peleja is to make a verse so complicated in meter, style or subject that the pattern cannot be duplicated by another competitor. As repentistas alternate verses in this verbal joust, the winner is the one who demonstrates greater knowledge or verbal skill.

Recife is the geographic and intellectual centre of popular poetry in the Northeast.<sup>8</sup> Folheto sellers receive kindly treatment in the city plazas where, in contrast to other merchants who frequent the weekly feiras, they are permitted to construct and keep permanent stalls for their booklets. Also, police and other authorities are

lenient toward the public reading of folhetos, allowing repentistas to set up public-address systems which amplifies their sales-pitch far beyond the boundaries of the market.

## 2. Literatura de Cordel: Socializing and Educating Working-Class Women

### a. The Participation of Women in the performance and publication of Literatura de Cordel

While there is no barrier to becoming a repentista simply because of gender, it is nevertheless rare to find women selling folhetos, and rarer still to find a women poet-singer. This is not because women are not interested in the art form. Particularly among sertaneiros some women gain notoriety as repentistas. However, these women are for the most part illiterate, and have simply memorized the poems they know. Their recitations typically take place in their homes, as entertainment for fellow villagers during special feiras or feast days. Few women consider becoming full-time repentistas since they reject the transient lifestyle the profession demands. Long hours of selling and constant travelling to regional markets conflicts with the responsibilities of being a wife and mother.

Women do, however, participate in authoring, collating, and publishing folhetos. Traditionally, women have been helpers to their husbands and fathers in the oral composition of verses, and in the actual physical work associated with preparing the folhetos for market. Thus, although José Bernardo da Silva eventually became one of the largest folheto printers in the Northeast, his wife continued to slit the pages of his booklets with a scissors for almost twenty years before he finally invested in a paper-cutter. If a woman has

had a rudimentary education, she may work as a secretary, transcribing poems which are dictated to her, or she may serve as a proofreader for texts that are ready for publication. Even an illiterate woman may be consulted for help with a folheto, especially if she is known to possess pronounced musical ability. On occasion, such a woman is consulted to ensure that the stanzas of the folheto contain the requisite number of beats. The poet reads his work aloud, while the woman measures for the correct rhythm by metrically tapping out the syllable count with either hand or foot.

b. The Exemplo

Although folhetos may be authored on any number of subjects, one predominant theme is religion and morality. This topic is of singular seriousness in the cordeis, since almost every folheto raises some ethical question which tests the protagonist. Stories of romance, fantasy, and history are often told in such a way that the outcome of the tale hinges upon the moral or immoral choices made by the central characters. Thus, while many folhetos are amusing and some are even pornographic, almost all have underlying tones that are solemn and didactic. When a folheto has an explicit moral lesson, it is called an exemplo ('example'). Exemplos draw heavily on biblical material and the lives of certain saints, but may also be portrayed through animal fables, or myths. Yet, in each diverse form, the message of the exemplo is unambiguous and readily apparent, as in 'The Greedy Man Punished', or 'The Son who beat his Mother and turned into a pig'. The concluding lines of an exemplo frequently take on sermonlike tones,

urging the reader to take heed of the fearsome outcome, lest he himself fall prey to such perversity and its accompanying fate:

Não se engane com o mundo  
Que o mundo não tem que dar  
Quem com ele se iludir  
Iludido ha de ficar  
Pois temos visto exemplos  
Que é feliz quem os tomar.<sup>9</sup>

Don't be misled by the world  
because the world has  
nothing to give  
him who confides in it;  
because [in this story]  
we've seen examples which the  
wise person is happy to heed.

Educating women regarding social mores is straightforward and simple in the folheto. Extreme examples of the consequences of both wrong-doing and right-living are portrayed in the stories. These accounts, whether based on fact or fiction tend toward reinforcing conservative, time-honoured middle-class values in northeastern society. Although folhetos are composed, sold, and read almost exclusively by the working class, all the stories which have a happy ending do so largely because the hero or heroine responds to personal trial with the virtues of middle-class morality. For example, when one repentista ended his verbal presentation of a story which concluded with the marriage between a woman and the man who killed her father (a scenario which might actually transpire in the life of a favelado), the attending crowd nearly rioted. A man who had purchased the folheto before the oral reading returned his copy and demanded in exchange a booklet which he had read previously, observing that 'at least that one has a decent ending'. Another onlooker took the stack of folhetos of the offending story, and ripped each copy in two, scattering the half-pages over the fair-grounds before the vendor could stop him. The seller later returned the torn folhetos to the author and demanded that he rewrite the ending of the poem to conform

with public expectation. The author complied. In the revised edition, the villain was punished (the middle-class notion of justice was upheld), and the faithful daughter was rewarded (middle-class morals of chastity and family honour were maintained).<sup>10</sup>

c. Pentecostalism and exemplo morality

The three most-published exemplo authors in Brazil all live in Recife.<sup>11</sup> The substance of their work reflects what the working-class Nordestino believes ought to be the proper priorities of females: a regard for family loyalty, respect for one's elders and other traditional authority figures, and as always, modesty and the careful preservation of personal and family honour through the maintenance of chastity prior to marriage and sexual exclusivity within marriage. Interestingly, such exemplo themes closely parallel those ideas which were repeatedly reiterated during interviews I conducted with congregadas. In an attempt to establish a composite picture of the 'ideal' Pentecostal woman. In fact, many cordel notions regarding female social and spiritual responsibility would be appropriate and likely topics for Pentecostal sermonizing. Even the style of some (though by no means all) Pentecostal teaching regarding the role of women takes on cordel-like overtones. Most exemplos socialize and educate women through negative means. That is, women are terrorized into complying with what is deemed to be acceptable behaviour, in order to avoid humiliation or painful punishment. In similar fashion, some Pentecostal pastors instruct women of the dire consequences of failure in social and moral duty. The following are selected examples of popular folhetos found in Recife markets.<sup>12</sup>

TABLE 12: THE DEPICTION OF WOMEN AS NEGATIVE ROLE MODELS IN EXEMPLOS

Disapproved Moral/Social Behaviour (Titles of <u>Folhetos</u> )	Approved Moral/Social Behaviour (Corresponding Themes of <u>Folhetos</u> )
'The daughter who murdered her mother in order to run off with a no-good'	Maintaining good family relations; Being a model daughter.
'The disobedient daughter'	
'The girl who beat her mother and was turned into a dog'	
'The girl who was attacked by a vampire for wearing a bikini when her mother said she shouldn't'	
.....	
'A girl who sold her hair and was made to visit Hell'	Guarding one's moral reputation; Refusing to yield to the folly of unwholesome passion.
'A woman who turned into a vampire after baring her shoulders'	
'Iracema, the honey-lipped virgin'	
'The life of a prostitute'	
'The marriage of Chico Tingole and Maria Puff-of-Smoke'	
'Midnight in the Cabaret'	
'The woman who asked the Devil for a child'	
'The woman who had a passion for priests'	
.....	
'The girl who turned into a snake' (Due to her disbelief in miracles performed by Padre Cícero)	Demonstrating respect for authority figures; Mute acceptance of one's role as a woman.
'The Suffering of Alzira'	
'The Sufferings of Genoveva'	
'The Sufferings of Margarida'	

#### d. A Theology of The Laity

As the chief form of popular literature among the Recife working class, literatura de cordel teaches social values to a wide-ranging audience. One of the cordels' most attractive features (proven by the man who was so incensed at the inappropriate ending of the folheto that he destroyed the remaining pamphlets of the same title) is the fact that in the folheto, treatment of life is predictable, sound, and even-handed. Truth triumphs; right prevails. This notion of a black-and-white world where ethics are unequivocally rigid but fair, transfers directly into the theology espoused by cordel authors. The underlying assumptions that the righteous will be vindicated and the wicked will be punished are present in each story.

#### 1. Women and the Judgement of God

In biblical literature, judgement is reserved for those who sin against the commandments of God. However, in the literatura de cordel, 'sin' may take on any number of meanings, especially where the activity of females is concerned. To be sure, 'sins' are first of all defined as a breaking of any of the Ten Commandments, but from here, the imagination of the folheto author takes over. Any of the following may be transgressions worthy of God's wrath: talking back to a superior, thinking about taking a lover, doubting God's power aloud, squandering excessive time in dancing the samba, or running about in tight pants or short shirts. In the exemplo, social 'sins' are as significant in establishing one's eternal destiny as are biblical sins.

Significantly, the most important of all dilemmas depicted in exemplos has to do with social-moral rather than spiritual-moral evils,

battles between firmeza and falsidade. These words appear repeatedly in cordel texts. Firmeza may be translated as 'loyalty' or 'constancy'. Women who exhibit firmeza contribute to the stability of the social order. They are inevitably rewarded for fulfilling their moral and relational obligations by receiving material and spiritual prosperity (though this is not usually obtained without a protracted struggle). Falsidade, in contrast to firmeza, endangers the social order. Falsidade is 'deceit', 'double-dealing' and 'betrayal', both a sin against the laws of God and against the social 'laws' of society. Those who will live by falsidade inevitably die by falsidade:

Nesse romance se ver	In this romance one sees
Quanto e vil a falsidade	How vile <u>falsidade</u> is;
Nunca triunfou na vida	No one succeeds in life
Quem usasse da maldade	who uses this evil.
De acordecio com sua ofensa	In accord with one's offense
Tera ele a recompensa	will be the recompense
Da sua perversidade. <sup>13</sup>	of his perversity.

Women are repeatedly seen to be guilty of the sin of falsidade. Exemplos often portray women as being clever, sly, and deceitful. They 'sin' through speech and innuendo, the earmarks of those who are consumed by falsidade. As such, women are worthy of the most severe penalties of all, according to the scale of judgement employed in the world of the cordel. Usually, the punishment for deceit or for breaking one's word takes the form of permanent transformation (as in The Girl who Turned into a Snake) or a reduction in social status. Whereas men usually maintain their social position until the end of the folheto story, when their sin may be uncovered and they die, the woman's fall from grace is normally immediate and public. In The Knight Roland, for example, the hero orders his sister banished and



killed because she is pregnant and unwed. She deceived her brother; he thought her chaste. Other female characters suffer immediate physical and material loss when they 'sin'. Health, wealth and beauty vanish overnight, and typically, the woman continues to atone for past sins until the hour of her death.

The falsidade of prostitution is viewed with particular disfavour by exemplo authors and audiences. If prostitutes do not reform their ways, they invariably meet an exceptionally gruesome end. Sick, penniless, and forced to accept alms from happily married men who do not recognize them, they die alone and unloved. In only one circumstance is the female falsidade of prostitution forgivable. That is when the social 'wrong' of selling sex is acquitted by a greater spiritual 'right'. In the folheto story of Teresa Batista (modelled after the novel by Jorge Amado) the heroine is a poverty-stricken orphan from the sertão who is mercilessly raped by a city man while she is still a teenager. She is abused by individuals who represent the hated authorities of the middle and upper classes: a sugar mill owner, a judge, and a corrupt priest. Though she succumbs to the inevitable fate of having to prostitute herself to earn a living, now that she has lost her reputation, she is commended by the folheto author as 'never a procuress and even as a libertine, she never sold her honour'. In maintaining the equilibrium of society by stoically enduring the unfair dealings of life ('you were an example among harlots in your suffering...a fallen woman, you remained a sanctuary of courage') and by placing supreme moral value on personal and family honour, Teresa is absolved of her sin and is acquitted of judgement.<sup>14</sup>

# 11. Women and the Justice of God

A balanced view of the nature of God in the exemplo is undertaken through the emphasis of divine justice as a second major theme. While moral degradation demands God's wrath, moral uprightness earns His approval and reward. Lay-theology in the exemplo, while not depicting a personal Divinity, at least portrays Him as neither false nor fickle. Consistent in his character, God judges women who err, and demonstrates justice on behalf of those who cannot effect justice for themselves. The harsh realities of life for the poor and the widowed are not always done away with, but the righteous individual is assured of God's care:

O justo sofre na terra	The just suffer on earth,
Porem por Deus e aceito. <sup>15</sup>	but God stands by them.

The justice of God may be demonstrated in the exemplo in diverse fashions. Although love is one of the Biblical attributes of God, the connection between love and justice is not often made in the folheto. To the working class, the love of God may just as adequately be demonstrated by a divinely-caused act of retribution perpetrated against the heroine's enemy than might any gesture of mercy and forgiveness. In cordel lore, violent revenge is not out of keeping with God's vindication of moral uprightness. Murderers are themselves killed by heinous methods. Seducers lose all their wealth and are driven insane. In one story, the protagonist cheerfully chops off the fingers of the culprit's hands one by one, to make him realize that 'there is a God in heaven'.<sup>16</sup>

In accordance with the exemplo's affirmation that firmeza is an essential attribute of God, cordel heroines are guaranteed

supernatural vindication of righteous acts. The provision of divine justice extends to all women, even to the despised prostitute. If, as in the case of Teresa Batista, the prostitute entered her profession by default, that is, as a result of a personal injustice rather than as a willful immoral choice then she may in time be totally exonerated before her peers. As a victim or a martyr, the prostitute engenders divine support. In her suffering and humiliation, she becomes akin to the mother of Christ, whose personal reputation was also defamed (albeit in unique circumstances) as a result of the social conventions of her day.

As a topic, the justice of God looms largest in the worldview of the exemplo author when prayers are offered for clemency in the midst of unrelenting poverty.

A Deus farei um pedido  
 Não sei se sera pecado  
 Para Ele conceder-me  
 Um viver mais liberado  
 Sinto a luta e o desgaste  
 Já me deixando cansado  
 Um pouco desanimado  
 A doença me atrofia  
 A família me impertuna  
 A era me desafia  
 A pobreza me desgosta  
 A verdade me vigia  
 Tenho vontade de um dia  
 Dar um chute na pobreza  
 Unir-me com a coragem  
 Acabar com a moleza  
 Abraçar-me a elegância  
 E segurar-me a riqueza.17

I will make a request to God  
 (I don't know if it's a sin)  
 that He grant me  
 An easier life  
 since I'm beginning to weary  
 of the constant struggle.  
 A little disheartened,  
 sickness atrophies me.  
 The family importunes me,  
 time itself defies me,  
 poverty weighs on me,  
 (even though) the Truth protects me.  
 I have a desire to one day  
 give poverty a swift kick,  
 take on new courage,  
 end hesitation,  
 embrace elegance and  
 secure riches for myself.

Ever mindful that the virgin Mary was a widow whose son was a working-class tradesman, exemplo poets most often depict the gruelling poverty of their heroines as a mark of identification with the mother of Christ. In the morality of the literatura de cordel, working-class

women are to bear their burden as best they can, and be grateful for what limited relief from their misery can be gained through everyday pleasures of friendship and family. Divine justice, if not in evidence in the present, will be theirs someday. In the meantime, the righteous woman submits to the omniscient if obscure reasoning for her underprivileged position in life:

O Santo Deus incríado...  
Do teu poder sacrossanto  
Não posso recalçar  
Nem da tua onisciência  
Não devo mesclatizar.18

Oh Holy ever-present God...  
Against your sacred power  
I cannot rebel;  
Neither your omniscience  
Ought I to question.

### 3. Pentecostalism: A Contextualized Theology for the Working Class

In the dynamic public preaching of its ministers and membership, Pentecostalism presents its message in a manner congruent with the literatura de cordel. Pastors and evangelists inform and instruct their audiences regarding social and spiritual 'laws' while employing the street-wise rhetoric of the repentista. It may be argued that it is precisely by retaining authentic working-class vocabulary and the structure of the oral performance of the cordel during Pentecostal preaching that enables the tenets of Pentecostal doctrine to be more easily accepted, adopted and assimilated by the working class.

That Pentecostalism has refrained from attempting to ex<sup>o</sup>cate old speech patterns in its converts--replacing street terminologies with 'Church speak'--has worked in its favour. While profanity is forbidden and vulgar speech is frowned upon, by and large, Pentecostalism permits its adherents the freedom to express their faith in a manner congruent with their class and social background. The retention of 'unsanctified' speech forms in the worship service is

an important component in the matrix of Pentecostal Church growth in the Northeast. Artificial social barriers such as linguistic form are stripped away, in order that no distraction will deter sincere religious seekers. Liturgy is made intelligible and relevant by the use of common language forms. In essence, Pentecostalism is 'contextualized' for the working class.

By permitting a working-class, colloquial vocabulary to be used in all aspects of its church services, Pentecostalism effectively limits the social dislocation of its converts. The new crente does not have to undergo a period of probation and training in order to become a member in good standing (as in Roman Catholicism, where catechism precedes a first communion). In fact, the Pentecostal believer is forced to speak in public (ie. 'testify') almost immediately upon conversion (see Chapter VI). This eliminates the possibility of setting aside time for discreet advisement on church etiquette and appropriate public speech-making, even if it were thought to be desirable. In Pentecostalism, success in public speaking is measured largely by the individual's enthusiasm, sincerity, and skillful story-telling. Willing participation in a meeting is what gains public approval, even if grammar and syntax falter.

#### a. Public Prayer

Congregational members may be called upon at any time during the course of a public meeting to testify, sing or pray. It is especially common for women to be asked to pray in a public meeting, and in this duty, most females excel. While their petitions generally tend to be

shorter than those offered by their male counterparts, they also tend to be more emotive and personal. Even critics of the movement would be hard-pressed to suggest that women do not demonstrate sincerity in their praying, as many intercessors are actually moved to tears by the ordeal. Since it is not known beforehand who will be invited to pray in any given meeting, it is not possible to practise one's role ahead of time. The intercessor may be assigned any one of a variety of topics for her prayer, from needs for physical healing, to financial concerns, to a prayer of blessing for a newborn child. Just as a repentista must be quick-witted and able to think on his feet, so an intercessor must speak from her own mind and heart, transfixed in the essence of the moment.

Even new converts are not exempt from the duty of public prayer. If the intercessor is just a beginner, she must produce the best extemporaneous performance she can. No one minds if she mimics the presentation patterns which she has seen modelled by older, more experienced women. Of course, the one who offers prayer must always be respectful toward God, but Pentecostalism stresses that any word, uttered in sincerity, will do. This emphasis on willingness over ability facilitates Pentecostal congregational growth. Right from the outset of conversion, the new crente is on equal footing with more mature believers. True, the new convert cannot aspire to immediate leadership in the assembly, but in public participation in church meetings, she is not at any disadvantage with her peers.

This is in direct contrast with the practices of Catholicism, where prayer functions, in part, as a mechanism whereby status is

conferred and maintained. Since most individuals who regularly attend Mass know by heart the prayers and congregational responses in the ritual, it is easy to identify those congregational members who are long-time church-goers, well-versed in the rites of Romanism. They are the ones who repeat the prayers with ease. Conversely, newcomers or infrequent attenders cannot enter into the Mass with the same degree of comfort and confidence, remaining closed-mouthed while others quickly and effortlessly repeat long responsive passages in unison with the priest.

While Catholics would assuredly agree that any sincere seeker is always heard by God, their doctrine and practice also underscores the belief that one must not be overly-familiar with God. Catholicism teaches that there is a 'right' way to go about making petitions to the Divine, through the use of intermediaries. The prayers of a priest are judged to be efficacious, as are prayers offered in prescribed fashion to the saints, Mary and Christ. However, the Catholic viewpoint tends to downplay the efficacy of spontaneous unrehearsed prayers offered directly to God by the petitioner, during the course of the Mass. That this is so is evidenced by the fact that the prayers contained in the missal are all formal, written prayers. Even educated priests do not normally extemporize in prayer during the ritual. Pentecostal believers criticize Catholic prayers as weak and innocuous, because even the daily collects are composed weeks in advance of the specified date of the Mass, by an outsider who neither knows the congregation nor is known by them. The prayer is further judged ineffective, on the basis that published prayers intended for

use by large groups are often generalized. Pentecostals query: how can one man in an office in Rio or São Paulo know what concerns this local assembly? How can the prayer of a rank outsider hope to fully address the specific concerns this church has? Pentecostal observers argue that while the ideas contained in written texts may come close to approximating the sentiment of petitioners' hearts, the words are still not their words!

Pentecostals regard such reliance upon memorized prayers to be a sign of spiritual impotence, and therefore to be avoided at all costs. In fact, the more impassioned pleas of a roughly-phrased prayer from the less-experienced may be judged to be a better performance in public speech than the smoother presentation of a long-time *crente*. One of the most moving prayers I witnessed was given by an elderly convert who was a virtual babe in Pentecostalism. Taken aback when asked to lead in congregational prayer, the convert hesitated several seconds before launching into a loose paraphrase of the Lord's Prayer. The assembly gave the intercessor its heartfelt support. Loud shouts of 'amen' and 'aleluia' punctuated the pauses in the delivery of the prayer, and some women sitting close to me actually burst into tears at the conclusion of the prayer. When the service was dismissed, church members were especially warm in their praise of the new convert who had so courageously taken the opportunity to publically participate in the service.

#### b. Public Preaching

That Pentecostal preachers have surreptitiously copied aspects of the performance of the cordel for use in their preaching cannot be



denied. Included in every sermon is a bit of the desafio. A good preacher will enthrall his audience with his ability to play the role of the devil's advocate, goading his hearers into responsiveness, testing the catechism of their faith. The preacher patterns his impassioned soliloquy in the mode of a battling repentista, baiting his hearers into adopting a defensive stance. The following is a passage taken from my observation notebook, detailing the presentation of a sermon during one particularly lively Sunday evening service:

'The Desafio'

Repentista A:  
(The Pastor)

'...There are some people who claim 'God is dead!'

'When you look around you at the problems in the world today, you have to admit they're probably right...If a God ever existed, He's dead and gone now'.

The preacher continues:  
'Certainly there cannot be a God, if such suffering is permitted in the world!'

The preacher pauses, smiles, then says softly, 'Ah...so, in spite of hardship and trial, you still have faith that God is ever-present?'

Repentista B:  
(Enthusiastic congregados)

Audience response, a muttered 'no...'.  
  
Much shifting and squirming about in the pews. The congregational comeback is a loudly spoken 'No!'.  
  
Some in the audience are now smiling, their rejoinder, a loudly shouted 'NO!'.  
  
People, joyfully laughing and clapping their hands in applause: 'Yes!, yes!'

What the preacher has done is to adapt to the pulpit a part of the cordel performance. A favourite repentista tactic, one greatly admired and appreciated with good humour by knowledgeable audiences, is what is known as amar a rede, or 'stringing one's hammock'. This strategy can take one of two forms. The first is when one poet is able to manoeuvre the other into a position where he is able to control both the meter and the subject matter of successive refrains in the desafio. Then, the repentista slips in (as though spontaneously) verses that he has prepared beforehand, causing his opponent to work very hard in order to formulate any retort. A second possible twist in this kind of verbal dueling is when a poet-singer is able to trick his opponent into thinking he is in support of one point of view, when in effect, the exact opposite is true. By taking a seemingly contrary viewpoint at first and making controversial statements, he tempts his opponent to vehemently argue on what is, secretly, his side of the debate. If the repentista manipulates his opponent with great skill, he may succeed in getting his competitor to answer possible objections to his (secret) viewpoint, and may even get him to make effective conclusions on his behalf. When his opponent least expects it, the repentista declares his true colours, and notes, with unveiled humour that the views his opponent has just worked so hard to express are the opinions he himself has held, all along.

Another comparison between Pentecostal sermonizing and the desafio is in the manner in which preachers often develop stylistic speech deliveries that are unique and identifiable. Just as every repentista cultivates a particular tone and cadence of speech in the

performance of cordels, so also a preacher comes to possess through conscious effort or habit, patterns of expression and pulpit banter which, with minor variations, are so often repeated that they eventually become hallmarks by which he or she is known. The best Recife Pentecostal preachers might even be rightly paralleled to another type of local performers, called coquistas. Although anyone who engages in verbal dueling through on-the-spot poetic composition may always rightly be called a repentista, Recife has the unique distinction of creating a class of super-poets, coquistas. Coquistas perform to the beat of a tambourine when improvising in a desafio. The coquista must have intense concentration and a rapier-sharp mind to keep his verses rhyming and in time to the beat of the tambourine, when inventing verse after verse in the poetic challenge. Needless to say, coquistas have considerable status, and the fact that such a unique type of poet-performer exists only in Recife underscores the respect which working-class Pernambucanos reserve for those who can think quickly while under pressure.

Excellent preachers are very much like coquistas. Their concentration is intense, and their ability to keep a crowd spellbound, maintaining a constant tempo of words while telling stories with great suspense and good humor is a skill that is developed and honed through years of practice. At times, the preacher's skill must even exceed that of the coquista, since the meter of the beat that he must follow is not dictated by himself, but by the church musicians. When the chamada or 'altar call' is given in a Pentecostal meeting, interested enquirers are asked to come forward,

indicating their desire to commit to an evangelical faith. Normally, during this sermonic climax, favourite hymns with stirring melodies are played, to underscore the preacher's words, and to create a welcoming atmosphere in which individuals may declare their decision to convert. In order for this part of the service to have maximum effectiveness, the preacher attempts to fit his words of invitation to the tempo of the song which the musicians are playing. That this test occurs at a juncture in the service when the speaker often appears to be physically and emotionally drained demonstrates the genuine skill of good preachers. Since Pentecostal evangelistic meetings are frequently between two and three hours in length, and sermons normally preempt about half of this time period, the ability to effectively extemporize at the end of the service, especially when someone else controls the tempo at which words must flow, is no mean feat.

In a large city where the poor are often illiterate and many do not own a television set, and where 'home' may be little more than a mud and thatch hut, going to church to hear lively music and a good orator is--like attending a peleja--a form of fun, and plainly, good entertainment. Believers have dispensed with drinking and illicit sex as their pleasures; instead, participation in supernatural acts of the Spirit and listening to humorous, suspenseful and dynamic sermons and testimonies become their pastimes and modes of entertainment.

By patterning its preaching after the performance of the literatura de cordel and by encouraging its members to develop skills in extemporaneous public speaking through testimonies and prayers, the Pentecostal Church does more than merely educate for the purpose of

transmitting information or equipping for employment. While the academic, formal education provided by Pentecostal church schools and a ministerial training college benefits a part of its constituency, only the informal education provided in the context of large congregational gatherings benefits the entire church community. Sermons educate and inform without complicated ritual. Messages are not heavy theological discourses; rather they are practical, straightforward advice about daily living, which congregados of all ages can understand. The latent functions of Pentecostal preaching and teaching have been to create an increased self-awareness and self-confidence among Church membership, and to socialize Church constituents in both biblical and societal mores. In these respects, Pentecostalism not only educates, it stimulates. Arguably, Pentecostal adherents become better citizens, due to their involvement with the Church.

ENDNOTES: FORMAL AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

- 1 Robert M. Levine, Pernambuco in the Brazilian Federation 1889-1937 (Stanford, 1978), pp.62-63, 199-200.
- 2 Sixteen church and mission-linked schools were in operation in Recife in 1927. Levine, p. 62.
- 3 On missionary correspondence, see further R. Pierce Beaver, American Protestant Women in World Missions (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1968). See also Nancy Hardesty, Lucille Sider Dayton and Donald W. Dayton, 'Women in the Holiness Movement: Feminism in the Evangelical Tradition', in Women of Spirit: Female Leadership in the Jewish and Christian Traditions, edited by Rosemary Ruether and Eleanor McLaughlin (New York, 1979).
- 4 The name literatura de cordel refers to the way small folios, usually measuring four by six inches and numbering eight, sixteen, or thirty-two pages are often suspended from lines (cordel means 'cord' or 'string') stretched between two posts when they are on display in the marketplace. The booklets are printed on newspaper-weight paper, and sold for a minimal fee. No one knows with certainty when the first cordels arrived in northeastern Brazil. It is probable that they entered the colony along with the first settlers. By the 1700s, Brazilian-authored cordels were being distributed in the Northeast.
- 5 The cordel is a type of popular composition that traces its roots back to the medieval traditions of oral balladry performed by troubadours. Cordels are akin to the sixteenth century Portuguese pamphlet literature of-the-streets known as folhas volantes. Many of the first folhas to appear on the streets of Lisbon were simplified renditions of works by Luis Camões, Gil Vicente, Baltasar Dias and other well-known playwrights or poets. For works dealing with folhas in Portugal, see Albino Faria de Sampaio, Teatro de Cordel (Lisbon, Imprensa Nacional de Lisboa, 1922) and Literatura de cordel (Lisbon, Biblioteca Geral de Fundação Gulbenkian, 1970).
- 6 The Escola do Teixeira, the first great school of Northeastern poet-singers came into being in the Paraíba interior in the 1800s. Its members were largely responsible for shaping the cordel into a quintessentially Brazilian literary form. The Teixeira school substituted the sextilha (six lines of seven syllables following an ABCBDB rhyme scheme) for the then-prevailing European-borrowed four-line quadra (quatrain). For more on the Teixeira school and the history of the literatura de cordel in the Northeast, see Renato Carneiro Campos, 'Folhetos Populares na Zona dos Engenhos de Pernambuco', Boletim do Instituto Joaquim Nabuco, 4 (Recife, 1955) and Ideologia dos Poetas Populares do Nordeste (Recife, Centro Regional de Pesquisas Educacionais do Recife, 1959); Ronald Daus, Q

Ciclo Épico dos Candaceiros na Poesia Popular do Nordeste (Rio de Janeiro, 1982); Verissimo de Melo, Cantador de Viola (Recife, 1961); Candace Slater, Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel (Berkeley, 1982).

- 7 Both partners in the peleja adhere to an unspoken code of conduct. Though good-natured insults are common, limits to such banter are carefully observed. Failure to do so may result in actual physical fighting between the two combatants. Thus, the repentista may refer to his opponent as 'ignorant' and 'ugly' only so long as the words rhyme. He may deride his race or his supposed lack of virility if the remark can be included as a humorous aside in the peleja. However, the poet may not directly attack the integrity of the repentista himself. The fact that a number of pelejas do turn violent reaffirms the existence of bounds that some contestants ignore or overstep. Normally, however, if both partners live up to their reputations (and the audience's expectations), the peleja will end in an amicable draw.
- 8 Though centres for the publishing and distribution of northeastern folhetos also exist in Juazeiro do Norte, Salvador and Fortaleza, Recife is where the major cordel publishers have located. From Recife, folhetos are shipped to a wider national market. Normally, Recife publishers send copies of current printings to the south, especially to Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, where immense numbers of northeastern migrants have settled.

Some nordestinos have become internationally-known figures as a result of the city's centuries-old link with literatura de cordel. José Francisco Borges has become famous for the wood-block prints he designs for folheto covers. His work has been exhibited in the Smithsonian and the Louvre. José João dos Santos has toured throughout the country on government-sponsorship, popularizing the phenomenon of literatura de cordel. He has made recordings for the National Folklore Institute and has played roles in at least two telenovelas. Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante, author of more than 1500 folhetos and president of three northeastern poet's organizations, has had one of his poems sell over a half-million copies in twenty-nine successive editions. One of his prized possessions is a letter from Jacqueline Kennedy thanking him for his folheto commemorating her husband's death.

- 9 João Martins de Ataíde, A Vida de um Meretriz (Recife, n.d.).
- 10 Candace Slater, Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel (Berkeley, 1982), p. 203.
- 11 Jorge Francisco Borges specializes in writing exemplos about women. Most of his poems illustrate the bitter penalties of immorality. Joaquim Silva and Antônio Caetano de Souza have, between them, produced several exemplos on the evils of prostitution.

- 12 Field observations were conducted at feiras in the Largo da Encruzilhada; the Feira Avenida Norte, in Encruzilhada; and in three public squares in the city-center bairro of Santo Antonio: the Praça da Republica; Patio de São Pedro; and the Praça Assis Chateaubriano. Also, I frequently watched repentistas performing pelejas in the patio infront of the Igreja Santo Antônio.
- 13 João Martins de Ataíde, Romance da História da Imperatriz Porcina (Recife, 1946), p.1.
- 14 Rodolfo Coelho Cavalcante, Terresa Batista, Cansada de Guerra (Salvador, 1973).
- 15 José de Souza Campos, O Rei a Pomba e O Gavião (Recife, 1978).
- 16 O Monstro, o Índio e o Menino (Juazeiro do Norte, n.d.).
- 17 Campos, O Rei a Pomba e O Gavião, p.1.
- 18 José Francisco Soares, O Fenômeno dos Fenômenos: O Rio de São Francisco Secando (Recife, n.d.), p.8.
- 19 Attendance and observation at the Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil, Casa Amarela (Recife), 21 July 1985.



#### VIII: PENTECOSTALISM AND SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE AMONG THE WORKING CLASS OF THE BRAZILIAN NORTHEAST

Of primary consideration in an assessment of the socio-cultural impact of Pentecostalism in the Brazilian Northeast is a determination of the extent to which Pentecostal practice and theology has crossed lances with regional culture. Although Pentecostalism is now present in every state of the republic, it must be remembered that regionalism played a key role in developing and defining the movement, especially in its formative years. Furthermore, while Pentecostalism may today rightly claim its place as a significant 'new religion' on the national scene (and be judged and analysed accordingly), it is equally necessary to consider how, eighty years ago, the roots of what was to become the largest Protestant Church in South America found room to flourish in the relatively narrow--even confining--dimensions of the conservative, traditional worldview of the Brazilian Northeast. Pentecostalism must be evaluated, first and foremost, on the basis of this regional culture.

##### A. The importance of Regionalism in defining Brazilian cultural identity

To confirm that it is a regional and not a national culture which is primarily under review in this examination of Brazilian Pentecostalism is a concept central to an integral evaluation of the effects of the movement.<sup>1</sup> It would be both incorrect and irresponsible to talk solely of a national culture when discussing one of the largest and most socially diverse nations of the world. In examining the colonial history of Brazil, only a few major centers of

civilization and culture were readily identifiable, most notably those in São Paulo, Rio, Salvador, and Recife. These sites were the geographical and cultural centres of advanced Brazilian culture prior to the establishment of the Republic. Each influenced the developing identity of a distinct region, identities which have carried forward into the present century. Therefore, although it may be an exaggeration to claim the existence of a solitary Brazilian culture, there does exist a Brazil of the Amazon, another of the tropical and semi-tropical coastlands, and still another of the industrial, Europeanized South and Southeast. While it cannot be said that there are no distinguishing marks of a 'Brazilian' culture *per se*, it is understandable that those things which unite the entire country are perhaps more superficial than those which promote linkage between a group of people sharing a common ethnic or economic heritage in one area of the nation.

Regionalism directly touches upon the life of the Brazilian Pentecostal Church. Almost without exception, the working-class people among whom I lived and worked during field studies in Recife, João Pessoa and Natal primarily thought of themselves first as Nordestinos and then as Brasileiros. This notion surfaced in conversation after conversation, with no prompting on my part. Furthermore, it was apparent that working-class individuals rejected labelling as Pernambucan, Cearanese, Bahian or Paraíba, in favour of simply being identified as Nordestino. It may well be that people more readily identified with the Northeast as a whole than with particular political divisions within the region, due to the on-going

and sometimes massive migrations of the poor from one state to another within the area and from the Northeast to the Southeast, year after year. Regardless of bureaucratic needs to categorize citizens into patchwork pieces on the electoral landscape of the nation, the working class has tended to reject mere political definitions of who they are ('Brazilian' or 'Pernambucan'), opting instead to adopt the socio-cultural identity of 'Northeasterner'.

Within the designation of a northeastern culture is inherently imbedded the notion of a Brazil of the sertão. It can be said that among the peoples of the northeastern hinterlands there is a worldview based on an almost quasi-spiritual mystique. Where vast areas are sparsely settled or uninhabited, certain lifestyles and attitudes exist. These attitudes contradict any attempt to create a cultural identity simply on the basis of political boundaries.<sup>2</sup>

The Nordestino has a simple and intuitive understanding of the sertão—that vast, arid hinterland—which is reflected in a traditional and fatalistic attitude about life in which generation succeeds generation in an unchanging cycle. This innate bonding to the land reinforces shared cultural roots among peasants throughout the region. Their common experience of political, religious and economic marginality supersedes the generalized notion of national culture. Thus, while any notion of a Brazilian culture must encompass an enormous spectrum of divergent behaviours and beliefs, the cultural viewpoint of a working-class Nordestino is much more defined, and may actually be closer to the culture of a rural Bolivian or Peruvian than to that of a southern Carioca. Although defying a mechanistic

description, the worldview of the Nordestino contains elements of messianism and mesochism, perseverance and resignation. Even if the Nordestino is an urban-dweller, he still easily identifies with cultural roots from the backlands from which, in all probability, he is a migrant. Decades of retarded economic development and the limitations of physical distance between the Northeast and key national centers of the South has hindered travel, trade, communication, and as a consequence, the free flow of ideas. Hence, while sharing some cultural similarities with other regions of Brazil, the Northeast exhibits a philosophy and quality of life unique within its own nation.

Since the largest Pentecostal denomination in Brazil was born and brought to maturity in the North and Northeast, it is important to note those unique aspects of regional culture which speeded the acceptance of the 'new religion' there. What is involved in the cultural make-up of a working-class Nordestino? What facets of regional culture helped make the founding and development of the Assembléia de Deus and other Pentecostal groups easier or more difficult? A closer look at the cultural complexities of the Northeast is needed.

## B. Defining the Northeastern working-class culture

### 1. The central construct of fatalism

Folk traditions of the Northeast are replete with both implicit and explicit references to fate (fado in Portuguese). Popular poetry and cordel tales frequently support the belief that man is at the whim

of circumstances beyond his control, and can do little to alter the outcome of his own life. Popular literature, art, music and films of the region also tend to favour plots which portray the lives of romantic adventurers who, though struggling valiantly in the face of great odds in hopes of attaining cherished ambitions, typically see their dreams go awry due to some ironic quirk of fate.<sup>3</sup>

This story-line, with its belief in the inexorable and unalterable decree of fate and a correspondingly tragic protagonist is normally linked historically to its development as a major artistic theme in medieval Portugal. In later Portuguese history, the influence of fado extended even to the performing arts, where fado became an institutionalized music form in the Portuguese-speaking world. Still immensely popular today, this artistic genre focuses on stories of ill-fated lovers, of self-sacrifice in impossibly-doomed relationships, and of bittersweet failures in life, all rehearsed in the mournful crooning style of powerful, specially-trained singers.<sup>4</sup>

However, although fado has been documented in Portugal only since the middle ages, it seems apparent that the roots of fado stretch back to both a culture and a religion far-removed from Western Europe. Clearly, fado--exported to northeastern Brazil by way of her earliest immigrants and through the themes of popular music and writing which accompanied them--is a notion adopted almost wholesale from the Arab world and Moorish philosophy.

The concept of fatalism was most likely first introduced into the Portuguese worldview during more than five centuries of Moorish domination over Portugal (711-1244 A.D.). Since the Moors were viewed

as having a superior culture, were more learned than the Portuguese in arts and sciences, and were resident in the Iberian peninsula for a greatly extended period, it is understandable how the Portuguese Christian populace could be favourably influenced toward adapting their language and culture toward an acceptance of what is a central tenet of Arabic Muslim theology.

In modern Brazil, the forceful impact of the concept of fado has not been diminished by its relative distance in space and time from its middle-eastern origins. Terms which speak of frustration, resignation and fatalism abound in the everyday speech of Nordestinos. Colloquialisms heard commonly on the streets of Recife such as 'Se Deus quer' ('If God wills'), 'Que Deus esta servido' ('May God [is] will] be served') and 'Esta do jeito que Deus quer' ('That's the way God wants it to be') can find a rough equivalence in the Arabic phrases of Insh'allah ('If God wills'), bukrah ('tomorrow') and maaleesh ('never mind, what a pity, it doesn't matter').<sup>5</sup> Words which give weight to the notion that fado is indeed a controlling element of life seem to enter into nearly every conversation with a Nordestino. Even in churches--Pentecostal Assembléias included-- '...Deus esta servido' trips lightly from many tongues as a convenient explanation for procrastination, failure, or broken promises. The Islamic belief about fate has reached across the miles and the centuries to introduce a quality of indefiniteness and resignation about life into the worldview of working-class Brazilian Northeasterners.

This is not to say, however, that fado is still a 'foreign' belief in the Luso-Brazilian mindset. Gradually, over time, the idea of fado has been modified in the New-World Portuguese environment. Fado has helped establish the Northeastern folk-hero as an individual of infinite patience and stoicism, a person who can readily spend his life in support of a doomed cause or in the pursuit of an impossible dream, viewing his existence and the vicissitudes of life with a sense of resignation or perhaps mild amusement, knowing that in the end, it is futile to resist the inevitable overtaking of one's destiny; what has been purposed by forces beyond his control will be enacted in his life. The heroic figure may attempt to alter destiny, but this is an illusion.

Examples of such folk-heroes are among some of the Northeast's best-known anti-establishment rebels and messianic figures, all who came to tragic ends: Ganga Zumbi, the leader of runaway slaves who inspired the backlands republic of Palmares (1630-97); Manuel dos Anjos Ferreira (popularly called O Balio), leader of a peasant revolt in Maranhão (1838-40); Antônio Conselheiro (1835-1897), self-proclaimed messiah and leader of the 1897 Canudos rebellion.<sup>6</sup> Musical ballads and popular poetry extol the indomitable courage of peasant leaders who gave their lives for a seemingly noble cause. Still, in spite of their recognition of the valiant efforts produced by these historic figures, present-day Northeasterners realize that most would-be reformers often accomplish very little permanent social change. Nordestinos understand that though inspired leaders come and go, fado remains.

In the political sphere, fado provides a convenient and even romantic explanation of the pitiful economic and social reality of indigenous and low-born Brazilians. In fact, it may well be that the fatalism of working-class individuals is in part a protective rationale for their high probability of disappointment in life. Feelings of powerlessness to control their own lives can sometimes seem almost overwhelming.<sup>7</sup> Much has been written about the Northeastern Peasant Leagues of the 1950s and 60s, and their attempts to advance the quality of life for the agricultural workers of the region. It is ironic that when the first Peasant Leagues were founded in 1955, João Firmino campaigned for the rights of workers in the Galilee Sugar Mill to be buried in wooden coffins. The right to a proper death was his cause, not the right to a proper life!<sup>8</sup> Firmino's actions were a simple demonstration of Nordestino resignation in the face of what seemed to be an unalterable course of events. Having acknowledged his certain end, Firmino determined to make society grant him one concession, and why not? Death was the one right no one could take from him.

Fatalistic resignation is further expressed by the manner in which Northeasterners have often viewed the development of their region. A passive, dependent mindset has historically characterized much of the Northeastern approach toward stewardship of her natural resources. Almost without exception, the technological feats and scientific discoveries achieved in the Northeast over the last two centuries have resulted from the work of foreigners or southern



Brazilians, in a clear example of 'positivists' showing 'fatalists' how it could be done.

## 2. Self-sacrifice

Portraying the spirit of self-sacrifice as a virtue is a quasi-religious notion which companions the secular idea of fatalism in the makeup of the traditional Northeastern culture-hero. Josue de Castro, noted Brazilian diplomat and nutrition expert, wryly comments that in Pernambuco, 'for centuries both man and earth have been martyred by adverse forces--natural and cultural'.<sup>9</sup> The notion that self-sacrifice is a prerequisite to achieving greatness is an idea which is strongly reinforced by Roman Catholic Christology and by the latifundistas' exploitation of peasant slave-labour as a successful means of opening the Brazilian frontier for settlement and development.

### a. A Christological virtue

In Catholic Christology, Christ becomes the supreme example of the man who willingly and unattingly gives himself over to that fate which has been decreed for him. Nowhere is this illustrated more succinctly than during the trials which culminated in his death sentence. Christ was paraded before the Jewish high court, an Idumean prince, a howling mob of pro-nationalist partisans, and the Roman governor of Palestine. The Biblical record comments on these episodes: 'As a lamb before her shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth'.<sup>10</sup> Although he is the nucleus around which the whirlwind events of the Passion revolved, it is as if Christ remained in the eye

of the storm, detached from the drama swirling madly about him. In Catholicism, Christ is portrayed not as an individual who forcefully initiated action, but as a dutiful, passive object upon whom action was perpetrated.

Father, calling to mind the death your Son endured for our salvation...Look with favour on your Church's offering, and see the Victim whose death has reconciled us to yourself. 11

The Mass portrays Christ as the ultimate and universal martyr. It is his agonizing, degrading, hideous death by crucifixion that secures salvation for mankind. In what greater fashion could any man demonstrate his love for God, his love for others, and his commitment to a cause than by stoically enduring undeserved punishment at the hands of his enemies? Through the continual repetition of the missal formulae, Romanism enobles a weak, vulnerable, and passive saviour. Self-abasement, powerlessness and an unrelenting spirit typify the Catholic depiction of Christ.

Roman Catholicism further stresses Christ's self-sacrifice through the visual symbols of his death that proliferate as part of the devotional life of the Church. Icons and crucifixes alike demonstrate an almost superstitious emphasis upon the wounds of Christ as a focus of devotion. Some worshippers are fanatically devoted to the symbolism of 'the sacred heart of Jesus' (a heart with swords thrust through it), others offer homage to the divine by kissing the hands or feet of a Christ-replica. Still others are absorbed in devotion to reliquaries, illustrating the Church's macabre fascination in maintaining links with its glorious dead. Even the rosary is a constant reminder of Christ's suffering and death. The

'Hail Mary'--that prayer which is repeated as one circles the rosary, a prayer for every bead--concludes with these words: 'pray for us sinners now, and at the hour of our death'. The sincere believer hopes that he may be able to face his end with the same calmness and confidence demonstrated by Christ.

b. An economic expediency

Regardless of the enormous influence of the Church in Northeastern society, religion is not the only institution which supports the view that self-sacrifice is model behaviour. The Northeastern economy has endorsed forced labour and exploitive work practices since its earliest days. Throughout Brazil's colonial period, slavery played a significant role in the development of the agrarian and sugar economy of the Northeast. The idea that individual sacrifice is necessary in order to achieve significant accomplishments on a regional scale has often justified the ill-treatment of poor or indentured workers. From the first, African-imported slaves were considered expendable commodities in the development of agricultural land and in the opening of the Northeastern frontier. Plantation-bound priests reinforced the notion that slavery was an ethically viable system by teaching the virtue of sacrificial service to their parishioners: God demanded that a 'Christian slave' be subject to his master; in return, there was a divine guarantee of heavenly reward for the meek and obedient worker. With priests condoning the existence of a slave society, landowners secured a means of effective social control over slaves. The economic exploitation of slave and peasant labourers was thus enjoined with seeming guiltlessness, behind a

facade of social and religious respectability. Having learned from observing the actions of the past, the modern-day peasant labourer is more truthful than cynical when he contends that his individual life has little historical significance.

### 3. Failure

A final characteristic which helps define the Northeastern culture-hero is failure--and not just ordinary failure--failure on a grand and glorious scale. Northeasterners have a fascination with what could be termed an 'achilles syndrome'. That is, if given the choice of a short sensational life or a long but ordinary existence, the Nordestino is more than tempted to grasp for the moment of glory. In the event-oriented Brazilian society (in contrast to the time-oriented society of America and Western Europe), it is the occasion, not its duration, that matters. Assuring that one's life will be remembered is more important than striving to make it lengthy or 'successful' in worldly terms. The idea that glorious failure is to be preferred to moderate success is demonstrated, for example, in the lives of the cangaceiros Lampião and Maria Bonita. Hunted down and killed in horrific fashion by government forces, their bodies were then decapitated, and the disembodied heads put on public display in numerous backlands villages before being taken to Macelô and then Salvador, where they were the main attraction of the Nina Rodrigues Institute Museum for thirty-one years.<sup>12</sup> While undergoing such a grizzly death in early adulthood would certainly qualify as 'failure' in the Western mindset, for the Northeasterner, this fantastic if gruesome end only enhances the quality of adventure and romance

associated with the social bandits of the Northeast who, after brief but eventful lives, became larger-than-life folk-heroes.<sup>13</sup>

Under close scrutiny, the Northeastern working-class culture-hero emerges as a complex figure, whose characteristic traits reflect the merging of diverse influences: Islamic philosophy, Roman Catholic theology, and the history of a slave-dependent economy. The Northeastern culture-hero, it seems, can never win. A fatalistic outlook on life, a willingness to endure self-sacrifice for a cause, and a grandiose nobility in defeat have become the hallmarks of his personality.

#### C. Pentecostalism: A new culture on offer

Considering that many working-class Northeasterners unthinkingly identify with the image of the existing culture-hero simply by virtue of having grown up in the region, how is it that Pentecostal philosophy is able to alter the thinking of a significant minority of the population, about these characteristics which constitute the modal personality? Simply, the allure of Pentecostalism is that it effectively challenges many a priori constructs of regional culture, categorically rejecting the stereotyped culture-hero of fatalism, sacrifice, and chronic failure. Instead, Pentecostalism replaces the traditional Northeastern culture-hero with his antithesis. This hero is everything that the traditional culture-hero is not: he is optimistic, successful, even triumphalistic. In short, he is a winner.

Such a radical departure from historically accepted norms has fueled the curiosity of many. Lower and middle class individuals who are seeking for positive change in their lives are particularly drawn to Pentecostalism. The ambitious, the politically frustrated, or the economically or socially marginalized have often been among the first to risk examining its claims, speculating that Pentecostalism's positive world-view could benefit their social advancement.

### 1. Optimism

Enquirers soon discover that fatalism has no place in the Pentecostal worldview. This fiercely contradicts Northeastern peasant theology, which suggests mankind is born into this world to 'work and suffer quietly following the route that God has laid out'.<sup>14</sup> But Pentecostalism refutes such despairing, resigned attitudes with the words of the Apostle Paul:

We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed but not in despair; persecuted but not abandoned; struck down but not destroyed...Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day.<sup>15</sup>

Pentecostals refuse to accept a defeatist attitude in life. They look in confident expectation to a future that rewards them for righteous living in the present:

If God is for us, who can be against us?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?...No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.<sup>16</sup>

The view of one rural worker--'God pays us what we deserve, penny for penny'--is countered by the Pentecostal affirmation that 'no good thing will He [God the Father] withhold from them that walk

uprightly'.<sup>17</sup> Optimism, not resignation, typifies the Pentecostal philosophy on life.

Pentecostal teaching further dispels the notion that fatalism is a characteristic appropriate to a true culture-hero, repeatedly stressing that the Christian has power within himself to alter his social reality. This ability begins with the adoption of a positive mindset at conversion ('I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me'), and continues in the Apostolic assurance that if the believer will simply 'walk in the Spirit, ...[he] will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh'.<sup>18</sup> The New Testament command to 'walk in the Spirit' refers specifically to living a holy life. In the maturation process, a convert seeks to cultivate personal character traits such as love, goodness and gentleness. The ability to speak in tongues and heal the sick through prayer are a secondary phase in Pentecostal growth. The ability of converts to continually focus upon refining their behaviour rests in the confident belief that the Holy Spirit resides in and empowers the believer. The ambition to achieve greater control over the presentation of one's public image and to develop higher levels of life skills and a greater degree of confidence and personal maturity demonstrates just how revolutionary--at an individual level--the act of conversion to Pentecostalism can be.

## 2. Victory

In combatting the idea of self-sacrifice as an acceptable character trait of the Northeastern culture-hero, Pentecostalism argues that the scriptural portrayal of Christ contradicts any possible claim that sacrificial subservience is God's intended plan

for man. In fact, Pentecostalism rejects both traditional Protestant and Catholic interpretations of the life of Christ.

Pentecostals do not subscribe to the mainline Protestant preponderance for emphasizing the good news of the Gospel as the incarnation. While assenting to all Protestant doctrine which stresses the wondrous nature of God's self-revelation to mankind by His coming to dwell on earth, Pentecostals still resist the enthusiasm of traditional denominationalists who emphasize Christmas as the major event on the ecclesiastical calendar. Similarly, Pentecostalism does not follow the lead of traditional Catholicism in elevating the lenten season--which culminates in the death of Christ on Good Friday--to quasi-mystical proportions. Rather, Pentecostals claim Easter Sunday to be the high point of their annual calendar.

In establishing some common ground with Catholics, Pentecostals do acknowledge Christ's crucifixion as the pivotal point of history. However, Pentecostals contend that the re-enactment of Christ's death in the constant repetition of the Mass misrepresents the purpose of his incarnation. Pentecostals affirm that part of Christ's plan was to come to earth to die, however, they emphasize that his chief goal was more than dying; any mortal martyr could do that. Christ's mission was to rise from the dead. In resurrection, he defies poetic description as 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild', the Christmas babe-in-the-manger. Conversely, in resurrection, he defies depiction as a bleeding, broken body nailed on a cross. To the Pentecostal, the resurrected Christ is a powerful champion who overcomes evil in its representative forms of sickness and death. Pentecostals argue that



to gain a true understanding of Christ's character, he must be evaluated not merely as a suffering saviour, but as a risen Lord. In opposition to other Protestants, Pentecostals see Christ almost exclusively as an adult, not a child; in contrast to Catholicism, Pentecostals see Jesus not as a sacrificial victim, but as a victor. Pentecostals stress that while Christ's life as a child lasted twelve years and his agony on the cross was less than one day in duration, his reign in resurrected glory will be for eternity.

The essential distinctions of Catholic and Pentecostal Christologies are even boldly portrayed in church decor. Whereas Catholic altars are typically arranged beneath a crucifix (an actual physical rendering of Christ suffering on the cross), the walls of a Pentecostal church sanctuary bear the symbol only of a cross, if anything at all. In large Catholic cathedrals, crucifixes are sometimes life-size or larger, and it is inevitable that the image and its latent message of self-sacrifice becomes a focus for private meditation. However, in Pentecostal churches, the emblem of the cross always stands alone. There is no human image symbolically agonizing on the cross, and congregados are instructed that there is no merit in using the cross as an aid in meditation or prayer. The cross is displayed in Pentecostal churches to demonstrate that it is empty; Christ, having died in order to achieve man's salvation, is now risen, thereby declaring his omnipotent and omnipresent Lordship.

In Pentecostal theology, there is not even a hint that Christ is a self-sacrificing martyr whose example the devout follower must emulate. Rather, Christ is portrayed as making a rational choice to

undergo death. He is not swept away on a tide of emotion, or worn down mentally until he can no longer resist the challenge of his enemies. He declares: 'No man takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord'.<sup>19</sup> Christ is seen as orchestrating the events of the Passion. Though the thought of his imminent death is abhorrent to him, he faces the ordeal with a determined focus upon what lies beyond the crucifixion: 'Jesus...for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame'.<sup>20</sup> The enticement which Pentecostalism offers northeastern working-class Catholics is a new view of Jesus. Christ is no longer a passionate but passive martyr; rather, he is a dynamic messiah-figure. He is the culture-hero who overcomes all obstacles, even death.

### 3. Positive Achievement

Finally, Pentecostalism challenges the notion that bittersweet failure is the inevitable consequence of a heroic life. Pentecostals contend that neither Christ nor his followers are failures. In fact, one characteristic that distinguishes Pentecostals from both Catholics and traditional Protestants is their self-assuredness. This self-confidence is sometimes displayed in brash behaviour which causes offence, and Pentecostals are often accused by their critics of portraying a spiritually superior attitude.<sup>21</sup> Be that as it may, Pentecostals strongly believe that the eventual outcome of their lives is meant to be for God's glory and their good. Confident that the power Christ demonstrated in the resurrection is available to be channelled through their lives, Pentecostals are willing to risk involving their family or their business in new or untried ventures.

Some of the most impressive entrepreneurs I met in Recife were new Pentecostal converts. They were willing to risk their meagre amounts of capital in novel ventures, because they believed that a divine presence overshadowed them, protecting their best interests and giving them guidance. While such an esoteric view of business management might be understandable if a successful entrepreneur made these claims, it was even more interesting to hear the same logic when it came from self-styled businessmen who had gone bankrupt. One female merchant explained that for the Pentecostal, true success is no longer measured in a 'worldly' way: even if she lost everything, her soul would be secure. New priorities--the spiritual over the financial--and the security of a new church 'family' to fall back on if things did not work out (churches sometimes lend money to their members at zero or low percentage interest) provided all the incentive she needed to begin a small cottage industry, fashioning hand-woven ropes, baskets and bags out of hemp which she had picked out of neighbourhood garbage mounds.<sup>22</sup>

Pentecostalism promotes long-term solutions to chronic social problems by instilling in crentes both the desire and the ability to better themselves. Believers are taught to heed the command of Saint Paul: 'do all things for the glory of God'.<sup>23</sup> The rigorous moral ethic of Pentecostalism emphasizes the values of hard work, thrift, and abstinence. Such values make possible rapid material and social advancement. For example, when both parents reside in the home and when marital fidelity is practised, family life stabilizes. Financial income increases with the forfeiture of indulgent vices--gambling,

drinking, smoking, theatre-going--now dismissed as unnecessary worldly pleasures.<sup>24</sup> Wage increases or promotions may also materialize, as the honesty, reliability and hard work of reformed individuals transform them into preferred workers.

Affiliation with Pentecostalism also increases the range and availability of individuals' socio-economic options. If poverty may be defined as living without choices, then mature Pentecostal believers cannot correctly be categorized as poor. Choices do exist for those persons who adhere to the Protestant work ethic. In the long run, increased self-discipline and good work habits boost crentes up the social ladder, from working class to middle class. In this way, Pentecostalism provides success not only in a personal context, but in a corporate sense and on a regional scale. By reforming individuals, Pentecostalism contends that it also pioneers a way for realistic long-term remedies to the social ills that handicap the Northeastern working class.

Neither traditional Catholicism nor Spiritism can claim to be as effective as Pentecostalism in motivating large numbers of individuals to strive for this kind of social improvement. Catholic theology reinforces the belief that a strong mystical devotion to the Virgin or to a particular saint can assist an individual in gaining a crucial first step toward advancement in life. While offering a sincere worshipper some hope of future prosperity, the act of making vows or giving offerings in exchange for good fortune and God's favour fails to produce the same immediate and rapid social transformation so often evidenced in the lives of Pentecostals. Through its patterns of

close-knit personal interaction and its system of church government, Pentecostalism enforces rigorous external discipline upon a convert. Exacting rules of behaviour conform a believer's actions to a prescribed lifestyle which directly promotes social progress. In contrast, a working-class Catholic who aspires to a higher class must depend more heavily upon personal initiative and internal discipline to enable the achievement of a similar goal.

While Catholic endeavours in education in the Northeast must be acknowledged, as in its contribution to the Movimento de Educação de Base (MEB)<sup>25</sup>, the opportunity and obligation of self-advancement through education has not been tied directly to moral imperatives given by Church leaders in the same manner and degree to which it has been done by Pentecostals. That the Pentecostal Church has been highly successful in motivating its constituency to achieve literacy cannot be denied. Government census figures reveal that the literacy rates of male members of the Assembléia de Deus in Recife and Pernambuco are more than double that of the state population at large.

TABLE 13: COMPARISON OF LITERACY RATES ACCORDING TO SEX:

	% Literate		% Non-literate	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Assembléia de Deus	88	76	12	24
Pernambuco	43	43	57	57
Brazil	63	59	37	41

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística, Censo Demográfico, 1970. For a period of twelve years (1958-70), IBGE published a volume on Protestant religions.

TABLE 14: COMPARISON OF LITERACY RATES AMONG TOTAL POPULATION:  
ASSEMBLEIA DE DEUS, PERNAMBUCO AND BRAZIL

	% Literate	% Non-Literate	% Unknown
Assembleia de Deus	69	17	14
Pernambuco	43	56	1
Brazil	60	39	1

Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística,  
Censo Demográfico, 1970.

Umbanda, the most common form of Spiritism in Brazil, competes with Catholicism and Pentecostalism in seeking a following among the working class, especially in urban areas. However, although there are some adherents of Umbanda who belong to the middle and upper classes, there is little in this religious system which offers hope for the upward social mobility of the poor. The very nature of the Umbandist ritual stands in the way of such socio-economic lift. In Spiritist practice, power and prestige are predicated on a medium maintaining 'clients' who repeatedly return to have problems diagnosed, cures prescribed and shamanistic rituals performed in order to exorcise evil or manipulate spiritual forces on their behalf. As long as Spiritist adherents must constantly re-employ the services of a medium to produce short-term solutions to long-term problems, little social advance can occur. Individuals remain focused on immediate concerns, and have little time or money to plan for the future. Also, to the extent that Umbanda ritual revolves around providing answers to social ills at an almost exclusively individualistic level, it will remain a largely lower-class religion.

In contrast to Umbanda, where heads of local terreiros maintain immense power and prestige within their subculture by means of knowing what the common person does not know and doing what the common person cannot do (a mãe do santo may enter a trance and then diagnose diseases in an attending client), Pentecostalism develops its power base in its laity, who--with the exception of episodic possession by the Holy Spirit--know only what the common person does, and can do only what the common person can do. While paid Pentecostal leaders are expected to provide counsel or prayer for any needy person, there is no financial payment (exclusive of a normal monthly salary) given to a pastor or evangelist for providing such services. In contrast to an Umbanda medium, pastors have no direct economic incentive to insure that individuals will continually return for personal assistance. Therefore, a pastor can encourage his congregational members to develop their social skills and spiritual gifts by dealing with immediate crises themselves. Pentecostal theology insists that it is just as effective to pray with a fellow believer as it is to pray with a paid, professional minister: 'Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective'.<sup>26</sup>

Further, whereas Umbanda leaders gain success and glory through their personal intervention in the lives of devotees, Pentecostal pastors bask in a reflected glory that is gained if their congregation is functioning well as lay ministers and if members are achieving financial and professional advancement. For example, if several congregados earn pay raises, then the financial base of the church will be strengthened. If a sufficient number of congregados can be

persuaded to become regular tithers, then it is possible for the pastor to forego any secular job and devote his efforts to full-time ministry. A full-time commitment to pastoring vastly increases his chances of being selected for ordination, which in turn greatly enhances his status in the Church at a regional level.<sup>27</sup> All considered, it is in his best interests to urge his people toward greater personal industry. The contrast is very strong: while Spiritist mediums have every reason to withhold social change from their followers (the dependency of their clientele keeps them rich and in a position of power) Pentecostal pastors have every motivation to be a catalyst for those actions and attitudes which will promote positive social change.

#### 4. Personal and Societal Revolution

The Pentecostal culture-hero is someone who displays optimism, exercises power, and achieves success. The attractiveness of this image, especially among the lower classes, has proven to be a powerful magnet drawing many interested enquirers into contact with Pentecostalism. Still, there are other reasons for the emergence of this religious tour-de-force in northeastern Brazil. One key factor which aids a ready acceptance of the Pentecostal message is its affinity with the northeastern preoccupation with continual revolt against authoritarianism. The thread of popular resistance and rebellion running through the history of the Northeast and especially of Pernambuco cannot but have helped the establishment and spread of Pentecostalism in this region of Brazil.



a. In revolt against traditional religion

First of all, Pentecostalism is in revolt against the established Church, both Catholic and Protestant. Pentecostals seek to override the influence of traditional Protestantism, which they criticize as complacent and inert. To the Pentecostal, most denominational Churches appear as introspective and insensitive institutions which are entrenched in philosophical pursuits (publish a journal for their members) at the expense of a practical, active faith (visit the sick in the favela). While Pentecostals do not often display outright animosity towards others in the Protestant camp, neither do they mask their feelings of frustration and impatience with their 'sister' Churches. Basic denominational theology is not considered suspect, but the effectiveness of its proclamation is seriously challenged by Pentecostal observers. Pentecostals scathingly denounce mainline Protestants for diluting the power of evangelical Christianity by presenting it in a dry and unpalatable form. Pentecostals complain that preaching is bland and lacking in entertainment value, worship is missing a creative spark of spontaneity that makes the experience enjoyable to the masses, and prayer for the sick or the demonized is weak and ineffective.<sup>28</sup> While Pentecostals believe that other Protestants genuinely desire to do good, they perceive the leaders of these non-charismatic Churches as spiritually impotent. The results of ministry--not just sincerity--are taken as the measure of a man and his message. If a minister appeals to God on behalf of a troubled individual, what result is gained? Does healing or exorcism occur? Unquestionably, ministers from other Protestant denominations are

unable to claim the same profusion of dramatic cures that seem to result from the intercession of their Pentecostal peers.

In fact, demonstrations of power in radical healings and exorcisms in Pentecostal services are frequently mentioned as reasons why adherents have left traditional Protestant Churches, opting for the newer religion instead.<sup>29</sup> The act of wooing curious or disgruntled church members from one Protestant denomination to another is pejoratively called 'sheep stealing'. Pentecostals have rightly gained a reputation as being chief offenders in this practice. However, their rationale for exonerating acts of 'sheep stealing' stems from the difficult circumstances mentioned above. Pentecostals believe that there ought to be no hesitation in proselytizing among members of other denominations, if those Churches are believed to be lacking in spiritual vibrancy. If a church member is not finding spiritual satisfaction in a traditional denomination, then a Pentecostal Christian considers that she is justified--even obligated, some would say--to introduce the dissatisfied church-goer to the 'good news' of Pentecostalism.

Pentecostalism is also in revolt against the authority of the Catholic Church. As competitors in 'winning souls', Catholicism and evangelical Protestantism have for decades enjoined a fiercely contested battle in the Northeast. No love is lost between the two combatants, and generally, no words are minced in their mutual distrust and disdain of each other. In the 1930s, the *Convenção Batista Brasileira* carried the Protestant banner against the Romanists:

Oh! Mother of Hell! Your popes are, as history shows, the worst devils, a band of assassins and immoralists of the first order...your monasteries, seats of immorality...your foundation is hell, your doctrine is evil! You are the legitimate daughter of your father, the prince of darkness! Rome, you are the accursed adversary of God, you are the substitute of Satan on earth...your end is near, your misery is soon to be revealed, when your nakedness will be seen, and the people that would adore you will be ashamed!30

In the 1960s, leading Recife *Assembléia de Deus* evangelist Manoel de Melo arrogantly declared: 'Rome has brought to the world idolatry...we...shall bring to the world the Gospel!'<sup>31</sup>

Such vehement condemnations demonstrate just how severely evangelicals have been blinkered, failing to take into account how the numerous and important changes in policy since Vatican II and the formation of the *Conferência Nacional dos Bispos do Brasil* (CNBB) (The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops) has paved the way for the development of radical Catholicism in the Northeast. However, Pentecostal narrow-mindedness also illustrates the ability of the movement to identify and then determinedly assail a suspected foe. Many Nordestino Pentecostals believe that they are the present-day champions of a divinely-inspired crusade to rid the world of Romanism. Since Pentecostals are 'endued with power from on high' as a result of their Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the accompanying act of speaking in tongues, they like to claim moral superiority over their Catholic opponents.<sup>32</sup> To many, an anti-Catholic polemic has become a familiar and comfortable stance. Northeastern Pentecostalism exudes the unabashed--even irritating--self-confidence of a movement that is youthful both in its history and its constituency, and anti-intellectual.

In contrast, Catholicism is an older movement (on both accounts) and one with a tradition of scholarship. Small wonder then, that Catholic intellectuals have in particular been enraged by the offensive criticism levelled against the Church by evangelical extremists. Some Catholic historians query the very validity of the Pentecostal movement, suggesting that religious fundamentalism, whatever its persuasion, is simply 'enthusiasm without substance', and a danger to be avoided in true spiritual pursuit.<sup>33</sup> Bishop Abdalazis de Moura, a regional secretary of the CNBB and a Recife resident, stated that Pentecostalism is plainly a 'conscious...protest against existing political, social, economic and religious forms'.<sup>34</sup>

Although the idea of rapprochement is at present far from the minds of either Pentecostal or Catholic leaders, help in reducing the vindictive name-calling between the two camps has emerged from an unexpected source: North American and European Protestant missionaries. These expatriates, most of whom have lived many years in Brazil--some being second or third-generation missionaries to Latin America--have in the past fifteen to twenty years made serious and systematic efforts to assess the national religious scene. While their theological orientations vary considerably, the common thread that unites them is that they possess the breadth of educational background to objectively evaluate the respective roles of the Catholic and Pentecostal Churches in the development of Brazilian Christianity. Some mission groups have produced reputable researchers and writers,<sup>35</sup> who by publishing major journal articles, writing books and addressing trans-denominational ecclesiastical conferences in

Brazil and around the world, have been able to dialogue with Catholic intellectuals--many of whom are also foreigners in Brazil--on their own terms, far-removed from the frenzied, emotional rhetoric that frequently typifies the street-level confrontations between evangelical and Catholic constituents.

It seems inevitable that tension between Catholic and Pentecostal factions in the Northeast will continue for some time. The groups have been at loggerheads since the 1920s (see Chapter III), and the continued growth of Pentecostalism and its distinctive role in the Brazilian ecclesiastical community has been forged mainly by cutting a swath through sectors of the population in what formerly was considered to be undisputed Catholic territory. Numerous conversions to Pentecostalism come at the expense of a loss in Catholic membership. Individuals who are interested in fostering a spiritual life but who have only nominal adherence to Catholicism or are disenchanting with the church, are automatic targets for opportunistic Pentecostal evangelists.

The spirited refusal of Pentecostals to acknowledge Catholicism's unspoken but real claim to uncontested religious domination in the Northeast has won numerous admirers for the younger movement. However, with Pentecostals seeking to woo numbers of nominal Catholics away from their Church, devout Romanists have been increasingly stirred to anger. Further conflict between the opposing groups seems inevitable, as Pentecostal policy has been to establish rigid ideological and behavioural boundaries around its converts, denying them any return access to old ways. In the Recife Assembléia

de Deus, young believers repeatedly receive verbal warnings to avoid contact with any events linked to folk Catholicism, such as a saint's day celebration, and especially, those activities which surround carnaval and the lenten season. Church leaders assured me that if members were known to have participated in carnival celebrations, they would be immediately and severely disciplined, and perhaps even excommunicated from the Assembleia.<sup>36</sup>

In spite of their doctrinal differences, Pentecostalism and Catholicism do have some common ground. Pentecostals and so-called 'radical Catholics'--that is Liberationists, those subscribing to leftist sentiments in the Church--have both endeavoured to involve themselves in assisting those who are oppressed, stifled or marginalized in traditional religion. Both Pentecostalism and Liberationism have doggedly stood their ground in the face of the economic and political might of hardliners within the historic Roman Church. Both exemplify the antithesis of traditional Catholicism, for they ally themselves with and work to advance the causes of the lower classes. Both Pentecostals and radical Catholics have established comunidades de base [base communities] on private landholdings in the Northeast.<sup>37</sup> Here, clerics and the laity work together, living in small self-sufficient semi-rural villages, seeking to establish community life based on Biblical models.

Still, while acknowledging these similarities between charismatic and Catholic groups, Pentecostalism retains its vital distinctives as a religious option. Verification of a personal conversion experience precedes any admission to church membership, and only adult believers

(age thirteen or older) are accepted as candidates for baptism. Pentecostalism is fundamentally anti-Catholic, anti-pope, and anti-establishment. Pentecostalism's defiant disregard for these sacred authorities may repel some conservative upper-class Cariocas, but it does appeal to the worldview of the working-class Nordestino. Conversion to a charismatic denomination may well be a conscious or unconscious expression of revolt against imposed authority.

b. In revolt against assumed status and class

Pentecostalism further assumes the role of the revolutionary by provoking individuals to rethink their viewpoint on traditional standards of status and social class. Slowly but successfully, Pentecostalism has encouraged blue-collar workers to adopt more positive attitudes concerning their own economic worth and social standing. Historically, labourers have been the brawny arm and broad back of the nation, exploited by the upper-class 'brain' which controls all major decision-making. The lower classes have remained in their less-than-enviable position partly because there seems to be few if any alternatives to their social reality. The poor and underprivileged exist merely to serve, or at best, to implement the plans devised by the sophisticated and wealthy.

Little has changed from colonial times, when schools opened their doors to young men from wealthy families, rather than to those middle-class sons who showed intellectual promise. This was seen to be especially true of Catholic institutions: education was the Church's gift to generous donors, while prayer and penance remained its bestowment to the poor. For many years, post-secondary institutions

trained small elites, who specialized in rarefied subjects like philosophy and law. Numerous high-born Brazilians became poets and writers, although ironically, the majority of their countrymen were illiterate. Other university graduates became economists, in spite of the fact that vast sectors of the population lived outside the economy. Even in the present era, few students in higher education are moved to undertake those professions which Brazil desperately needs--agronomists, public health workers, and mining, structural and civil engineers--because the ability to manipulate words impressively through speech or writing is esteemed as a mark of upper-class breeding, whereas working with one's hands is deemed to be poor-man's work.

Brazilian author Vianna Moog calls this obsession for the pretense of erudite intellectualism 'fake humanism and false universalism...a preoccupation with purely ornamental culture'.<sup>38</sup> Another Brazilian writer, Alberto Torres, declares that the national problem of Brazil has always been its superficiality and pursuit of prestige.<sup>39</sup> It would be accurate to say that in the major cities of the Northeast, an individual becomes a doctor to be a doctor, not necessarily to work as a doctor. Deference and the use of titles are important elements of protocol. Individuals are introduced not only by their name, but also by their occupation. Status and relative station in life are constantly reinforced through formal greetings: 'Bom dia, Senhor Arquitecto', 'Boa tarde, Senhor Doutor'. Since tradesmen and merchants have not attained a university-level education, they do not possess titles or command the same degree of



respect in the work force as do their upper-class counterparts. Consequently, efforts to generate a facade which portrays oneself in a high-prestige occupation can reach comical proportions, as in Recife, where plumbers are known to carry their tools in briefcases so as to appear to be white-collar professionals.

The desire to possess a title in order to increase social prestige not only influences an individuals' practice in dealing with educational and economic institutions, but also with religion. Indeed, opportunities for fostering personal glory abound in the Catholic Church, where impressive titles exist for many job positions open to volunteer workers.<sup>40</sup> There is every probability of gaining public attention and commendation by serving the parish. Pentecostalism, however, does not favour the dispensing of titles of honour to its core of volunteers, and approaches the notion of religious social-climbing with cautious uneasiness.

Titles, in Pentecostal practice, are held to a minimum, and those that are used only serve to reinforce a rejection of status-seeking. Titles in the *Assembléia de Deus* are defined not in terms of function, but in terms of relationship. Every adult member of the congregation is addressed as a 'brother' or 'sister', but not by any other designation which might promote a comparison between the social status of one individual and another. The correct formula to begin any official participation in a Brazilian Pentecostal service is to preface one's duties (be it singing, testifying, preaching, or simply giving notice of a forthcoming event) by repeating the phrase '*Irmas e Irmaos, a paz do Senhor*' ('Sisters and brothers, the peace of the Lord

(be yours!'), to which the entire congregation replies heartily and in unison, 'amen!'.

The only member of the church community who normally receives a second title is the congregational leader. Whether his jurisdiction extends over thousands of congregados or to just a mere handful is not important in determining his title, and whether or not he is ordained is of little consequence to the people. Whoever is the head of the local assembly is simply called 'pastor'. The use of this title is another indication that Pentecostals value relationships above social position. In Portuguese, the word pastor is still thought of in its very literal sense: a pastor 'shepherds' his people. That is, the emphasis of the Pentecostal leader's title is upon his direct participation in the lives of his constituency rather than highlighting his distinction from congregational members, as in traditional Protestantism, where ministers tend to be called 'reverend', or in Catholicism, where high-ranking clergy are addressed as 'my lord' (monseignor), 'your grace', or 'your eminence'. The only obvious accommodation which Pentecostalism appears to have made to Brazilian religious convention is in abbreviating the title 'Pastor' as Pr., a form easily recognizable as having been copied from the Catholic Pe. for 'Padre'.<sup>41</sup> The abbreviated title on letterheads and business cards seems to give Pentecostal leadership improved professional credibility.

Throughout its history in the Northeast, Pentecostalism has remained a largely unstratified movement. This in itself defies the trend of religion in the Brazilian experience. As a vocal minority

motivated by strong religious convictions, Pentecostalism is helping to change a Northeastern society which stresses social position and worldly prestige as the hallmarks of a successful life. As with all evangelicals, Pentecostals emphasize the fundamental equality of all people. They reject elaborate titles and fancy vestments as the accoutrements of spiritual office. Achieving a certain rank or position within Pentecostal denominations is determined more by personal initiative and charisma than by means of inherited wealth or position. Pentecostal pastors and teachers tell their congregations to take pride in their work; evangelists zealously proclaim that the common labourer is providing a more vital contribution to the economy of Brazil than is the so-called intellectual expert. In this way, Pentecostalism is assisting in the rise of a new self-consciousness and self-confidence among the working class. Though perhaps lacking in the ability to articulate its philosophy in scholarly terms, Pentecostalism is nevertheless a revolutionary movement. In bolstering the image of the working-class labourer, Pentecostalism is planting seeds of conscientização in the fertile field of Nordestino minds.

# ENDNOTES: SOCIO-CULTURAL CHANGE

- 1 I would agree with Enrique Dussel, who argues that Latin American cultures tend to be regional rather than national. See A History of the Church in Latin America: colonialism to liberation (Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1981). Dussel contends (p.26) that attempting to explain Latin American cultures in themselves is 'an impossible task, because they represent a nationalism that should be surpassed'. In the field of literature, northeastern author Jorge Amado emphasizes that attempting to speak of Latin American literature, rather than of regional literature defined and described on the basis of language or culture, '...is a colonialist attitude. All Latin American[s]...are different. Unfortunately, we are only united by what is negative--misery, oppression, military dictatorships...[But] If there's one thing that gives unity to the position of writers from these countries, it's that, in general, we're true to our people...'. (Organization of American States, 'Quick Quote', Américas, 41:2 (1989), 55.) It seems apparent that just as there cannot be a uniformly Latin American culture nor literature, neither can there be a uniformly 'Brazilian culture'. It is too superficial a view to speak only of national culture in a country that possesses such a vast diversity of land and peoples.
- 2 Euclides da Cunha, in his famous work Os Sertões (Rebellion in the Backlands), rightly recognized that the infinitude and diversity of the northeastern hinterland found its best definition not as a singular region, but as many interconnected regions. The decision to title his work Os Sertões, not O Sertão gives clear evidence of such an understanding.

Authors are not the only ones to recognize and appreciate the distinctives of the sertão. Musicians have spent considerable creative effort attempting to reflect the natural and cultural contours of the backlands. Starting with the period of nationalistic concern in Brazilian music which preceded the launch of the Republic, a number of composers favoured folk themes from the backlands in their work. Brasílio Itiberê da Cunha first published his popular piano piece A Sertaneja in 1869. Later, renewed 'nativistic' compositions became popular through the work of Francisco Mignone (b. 1897), a pianist, flutist, and conductor. He cultivated a national style relying heavily on folk musical expressions in his series of piano pieces Lenda Sertanejas. But the most prolific output of musical nationalism came from the pen of composer and conductor Heitor Villa-Lobos (1887-1959). Throughout his life, Villa-Lobos rejected most classical instruction in musical composition, opting instead for direct contact with popular musicians throughout the country. Around 1905 he undertook a series of trips all over Brazil that lasted eight years and resulted in firsthand acquaintance with the rich musical heritage of the rural Northeast. During this time, Villa-Lobos composed what is considered to be one of his finest works, Suite dos

Cantigas Sertanejas (1910). This composition, written for a small orchestra, was his elaboration of thematic material derived from backlands music sources.

- 3 Cordel literature, the street-stories of the Northeast, favour the theme of fate on repeated occasions. This is especially true when dealing with the misfortunes of the poor. A folheto version of Jorge Amado's Teresa Batista, written by Rodolfo Cavalcante, serves as an apt example of Nordestino thinking: 'Como qualquer meretriz, via na sexualidade seu signo, sua profissão' ('Like any prostitute, she saw sex as her fate, her profession'). The word signo literally means 'lot', the implication being that it was an unlucky pull of the 'short straw' or a bad roll of the dice that condemned Teresa Batista to this unhappy end in life.

Even film-makers identify the theme of fado as a major construct in the Brazilian mind. The sole Latin American film to be shown in the 1989 Cannes Film Festival competition was the Brazilian entry, Kuarup (English title: Destiny), directed by Rui Guerra. (Organization of American States, Américas, 41:2 (1989), (p. 9).

- 4 Fado is usually performed in intimate settings in small cafes in the late-night hours for adult-only audiences. The singer dresses completely in black. The musical style is difficult to describe: something of a cross between traditional Arabic chanting and the throaty sounds of American 'Blues'. The performer's voice should be capable of reaching a wide range of notes, sometimes more than two octaves.
- 5 The romanization and translation of these Arabic words is taken from Arab World Ministries, 'Living for God in the Middle East', Dateline (July 1989), p.2.
- 6 In Conselheiro's case, his revolt was not only political, but religious. Antônio Maciel, called 'Conselheiro' (the Counsellor) was a holy man who wandered the Northeastern backlands, repairing and constructing Catholic chapels. Antônio preached and prophesied in many sertanejo villages; healings and miracles were claimed as a result of his ministry. After the establishment of the Republic, Conselheiro's prophetic utterances came to have a clear anti-republican character. His preaching began to take up the millennial strain that had reappeared at various times in Brazilian history. In keeping with his Sebastianist beliefs, he prophesied the return of the Portuguese king, who would arise with an army from the sea to free men from the yoke of the Republic, and he predicted the end of the world would come in 1900. In open conflict with the authorities, Conselheiro led his following into the sertão and settled in Canudos, governing the remote village as an independent state. From 1895 to 1897, successively larger numbers of federal troops (500, 1300, and finally 5,000 men) were sent against the Canudos settlement. The Canudos community was finally defeated, but Conselheiro's followers fought to the very last man.

- 7 For example, Janice Perlman's study on favelados in Rio de Janeiro stresses the link between the sense of powerlessness among the poor and the phenomenon of fatalism. Perlman's sampling in Rio bairros revealed that 66 percent of favelados (a significant number of whom were migrants from the Northeast) said that God's help or good luck was the most important thing for the progress of Brazil, not good government or the hard work of the people. Similarly, 57 percent believed that 'everything that happens in a person's life is because somehow it had to happen' rather than 'it depends on what a person does to get what he wants'. See The Myth of Marginality: Urban Poverty and Politics in Rio de Janeiro (Berkeley 1976), p. 150 ff. Following Perlman's view, it may be argued that when the working class disparages its chance to 'get ahead' in this life, they are not reflecting an inborn resignation so much as a realistic assessment of their situation. If the actual constraints on their lives were altered, they would possibly respond quite differently.
- 8 Formerly, a poverty-stricken peasant was taken to the cemetery in a 'charity coffin' lent by the government. But this coffin proceeded no farther than the mouth of the grave. The body was removed and buried, and the coffin was returned to the municipal warehouse until it was needed again. De Castro notes: 'This travesty of a ceremony was the supreme humiliation, a mortification that seemed to the peasant to carry over even into eternity'. Josué de Castro, Death in the Northeast (New York, 1966), p. 12.
- 9 Josué de Castro, p. 22.
- 10 Isalah 53.7.
- 11 Francis Dickinson, ed., The New Mass Book (New English translation of the Order of Mass and Eucharistic Prayer) (Whitchurch, Hampshire, 1984), p.12. Emphasis added.
- 12 Originally, several cities in the Northeast offered to keep the heads of the cangaceiros on permanent display in their museums. Even an institution as far away as Berlin inquired about purchasing the 'collection'. In spite of other offers, the heads of Lampião and several of his band were given to the Nina Rodrigues Institute (later the Estacio de Lima) Museum in Salvador. The heads were kept on public display from 1938 to 1969, when in deference to increasing public pressure for their removal, the heads were interred in small crypts in Quintas cemetery in Salvador. See further Billy Jaynes Chandler, The Bandit King: Lampião of Brazil (London, 1978), pp. 228-240.
- 13 No less a figure than Francisco Julião, the Pernambucan leader of the peasant unions published a newspaper article extolling a view of Lampião that bordered on hero-worship. Julião was a member of the Pernambuco state legislature when in 1959 he called for the interment of the cangaceiros' heads, in an article in the Diário

de Notícias (Salvador). Julião declared that Lampião was the first Nordesteño to fight against latifúndia and the injustice of the powerful. As evidence, he pointed to Lampião's acts of giving alms to the poor and distributing the goods of the merchants he plundered to needy sertanejos. See Chandler, p. 243. It is interesting that Julião's article was written only two decades after Lampião's death. The violence, extortion and ruthless torture associated with his treatment of some backlanders were already being obscured by his more 'heroic' qualities.

- 14 Shepherd Forman, The Brazilian Peasantry (New York: 1975), p. 212.
- 15 2 Corinthians 4.7, 8, 16.
- 16 Romans 8.31, 35, 37.
- 17 Forman, p. 39; Psalms 84.11.
- 18 Philippians 4.13; Galatians 5.16.
- 19 John 10.18.
- 20 Hebrews 12.2.
- 21 Interviews with Hannah and Charles Josias, Rio de Janeiro, May 22 and 23, 1985; Interview with Maria de Graça Campello, Recife, June 3 and July 4, 1985.
- 22 Interview with Maria Santos, Coventry, United Kingdom, July 26, 1987.
- 23 1 Corinthians 10.31.
- 24 Many Recife street vendors augment their income by selling lottery tickets. Normally, the sellers are very persistent in badgering passersby or individuals waiting in long bus queues. However, potential customers can stop a vendor in mid-sentence, simply by asserting 'somos crentes' ('we are believers', i.e. Pentecostals). The persistent salesman will end the conversation there and then, and no further attempt will be made to sell a ticket, since even the non-church-going population of Recife knows that Pentecostals do not gamble. I have observed instances where non-Pentecostals claimed 'somos crentes', simply in order to avoid the hassle of a prolonged sales pitch from a lottery ticket vendor.

It is particularly interesting that the primary rationale given in the Recife churches explaining why crentes are to refrain from gambling is not that it is an unwise use of money, but rather that as Pentecostals, they do not subscribe to the power of fate! Preachers teach that thrift, hard work, and skill--not 'luck'--brings financial prosperity. Gambling is looked upon as paramount

to admitting that one has completely abandoned faith in God's ability to provide. For the same reason, Pentecostals are similarly taught to avoid all forms of divination (eg. reading a daily horoscope), since that also is seen as an act of faithlessness in the face of an omnipotent God.

- 25 The MEB grew out of experiments in Natal and Aracaju with radio literacy schools in the late 1950s. In 1961, the MEB was brought into being at the national level through an agreement between the National Conference of Brazilian Bishops and the Ministry of Education. The most important link with professional educators was established through Paulo Freire, whose texts were used for literacy training, combining academics with developing an understanding of the learner towards his socio-economic environment. The MEB has as one of its major goals the conscientização of the working class.
- 26 James 5.16.
- 27 Very few Pentecostal preachers actually receive ordination. Often, pastors are lay preachers who work part-time in secular employment, and therefore do not qualify for ordination. Normally, only the leaders of large or long-established churches can expect to obtain this status. In some cases, pastors may have been active in ministry for fifteen or twenty years before being accepted as ordinands, since it may take that long to develop a strong financial base in the congregation which will allow the pastor to leave other employment and devote his full energies to the church. Consequently, pastors tend to remain in ministry in one place for lengthy periods of time. They have an understandable interest in attempting to secure their own financial and socio-economic future. Interviews with Thomas Fodor, Professor, Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste (Encruzilhada, Recife), June 24 and 26, 1985.  
  
To illustrate just how difficult the route to ordination is, Fodor emphasized that during the 8 years he had been resident in Recife, he had not known of any Assembleia de Deus pastor moving from the rank of being an appointed pastor to being an ordained pastor.
- 28 Interview with Pastor Izirelei Vleria Guimarães, Recife, July 31, 1985. Interview with José Gilme de Moura, Recife, July 13, 1985.
- 29 Interviews with 'Irma Severina', Campo Grande, June 27, 1985; 'Irma José Claydee', Igreja Batista Renovada and ADHONEP Youth, June 1 and 15, 1985; 'Irma Alta', Campo Grande, June 27, 1985; Eduardo Apolo Duarte de Lucena, Casa Amarela, July 7, 1985; Alcione Tavares Pitanco, Casa Amarela, July 2 and 7, 1985.
- 30 Jornal Batista, 2:4, 1931, quoted in Leonel Franca, O Protesto antismo no Brasil (Rio de Janeiro, 1952), p. 13. My translation.



- 31 Walter J. Hollenweger, The Pentecostals (London, 1972), p. 101.
  - 32 Acts 2.4. This reference is part of the Biblical passage which details the first recorded instance of tongues-speaking, verses which Pentecostals regard as central to their unique identity in the ecclesiastical sphere.
  - 33 Edward L. Cleary, Crisis and Change: The Church in Latin America Today (New York, 1985), p. 121. Cleary is a Dominican priest and professor with a long history of service in South America.
  - 34 Abdalaziz de Moura, A Importancia das Igrejas Pentecostais para a Igreja Católica (Recife, 1969), p. 3.
  - 35 Most notable among these would be William R. Read, Victor Monterroso, Harmon Johnson (O Crescimento da Igreja na América Latina); Frank Ineson (Brazil 1980: The Protestant Handbook); Eugene Wida (Understanding Latin Americans); Paul Pierson (A Younger Church in Search of Maturity); C. Peter Wagner (Look Out! The Pentecostals are Coming); Lawrence Keyes (The Last Age of Mission); W. Dayton Roberts, and William Smalley. At least six of these author-missionaries have earned doctorates from American universities or seminaries.
  - 36 Interview with Heather Chaloner, Recife, June 20, 1985; Interview with Stephen Chaloner, Recife, June 22, 1985. Interview with Elenice Biazil, Coventry, United Kingdom, August 13, 1991.
  - 37 One of the largest and arguably the most well-known Pentecostal comunidades de base is an agricultural colony located in the northeastern sertão, near the intersection of the four states of Sergipe, Bahia, Pernambuco and Alagoas. The comunidade is named Fazenda Nova Vida (New Life Ranch), and was founded with an initial group of thirty families, all of whom were given a property document for a piece of ground which was theirs to work. Each family received land according to its size and the number of hands they were able to put to work on it. The church which has been built on the fazenda is called Evangelho da Paz (Good Tidings of Peace), and is affiliated with the Assembleia de Deus igreja-matriz of Aracaju. For an interesting review of the history of the founding of Fazenda Nova Vida, see Donald Edward Curry, 'Messianism and Protestantism in Brazil's Sertão', Journal of Inter-American Studies, 12:3 (1970), 416-438.
- Catholic comunidades have also proliferated in the Northeast in recent years. One very useful study is found in David Lehmann, Democracy and Development in Latin America (Cambridge, 1990). Lehmann details how, fueled by the wave of interest in the educational reforms proposed by Recife professor Paulo Freire, and guided by the radical thinking of Recife Archbishop Dom Hélder

Camara, the northeastern Catholic church of the early 1960s underwent an enduring ideological shift, from a charitable concern for the poor to a concern for their rights and their organization. Lehmann talks of basismo, the notion of a social, ecclesiastical and political reformation arising through the efforts of grassroots organizers, many of whom are now living in the 'experimental' society of the comunidades de base.

- 38 Vianna Moog, Bandierantes and Pioneers, translated by L. L. Barrett (New York, 1964), p. 201.
- 39 'Empty flights of language...replace the ambition to educate the mind for the purpose of guiding conduct. Applause and approbation the satisfactions of vanity and self-conceit, comprise the whole ambition of man's minds.' Alberto Torres, The National Problem of Brazil (1920).
- 40 One example would be that of the catechista, the title given to women who primarily instruct children and youth in basic education and who help indoctrinate them into Roman Catholic belief. Though these women are not qualified to be teachers in a government-run school, they still are considered 'teachers' in a secondary sense, through their affiliation with the Church.
- 41 Even though the Portuguese word for father is pai, the Spanish term padre is normally used as the ecclesiastical title for Catholic priests in Brazil.

## APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW FORMAT

I. FÉ PESSOAL

- A. Porque você se tornou um crente Pentecostal?
  1. Porque você não entrou para uma outra Igreja--Católica, Espírita?
  2. Porque você deixou a outra Igreja?
  3. Qual foi o seu primeiro contato com a Igreja Pentecostal?
  4. Como foi o exacto momento de decisão em que você resolveu se identificava com esta Igreja?
- B. Quem foi a primeira pessoa da sua família que tornou um crente Pentecostal?
  1. Que influencia você teve na conversão das pessoas da sua família? que teve primeira?
  2. Se você nasceu um crente Pentecostal, porque você decidiu permanecer na igreja de seus pais/seus pais escolheram?
- C. Como você acha que deve ser o seu comportamento e sentimento como um crente Pentecostal?
- D. Quantas vezes por semana você vai à igreja, por cultos ou outras atividades?
- E. Que espécies de atividades são mais importantes para estabelecer e conservar a sua fé pessoal?
  1. Que espécie de oração é mais significativa (e mais poderosa)? --pessoal? em grupos? adoração? com outra mulher? Membros da família? pastor orando por você? Por que?
  2. Quão essencial é a leitura bíblica para o seu crescimento espiritual?
    - a. Com que frequência você lê a Bíblia?
    - b. Quais são os livros e versículos que você mais lê?
  3. Como você se sentiu em adoração?
    - a. Quando?
    - b. Como?
  4. Qual é a influência da música na sua vida espiritual?
    - a. Pessoal
    - b. Nos cultos

II. A IGREJA

- A. As Tarefas Das Mulheres
  1. Quais são as tarefas das mulheres pentecostais nas igrejas?
  2. Quais são as diferenças entre as tarefas do homem e da mulher na igreja?
  3. O que você acha que tem sido a maior contribuição das mulheres para as igrejas pentecostais nesta cidade? Porque?

## B. Os Dons Espirituais

1. Quais são os dons espirituais desenvolvidos pelas mulheres nos cultos?
  - a. No culto geral
  - b. No culto específico entre as mulheres
2. Como é feito o aconselhamento em sua igreja?
  - a. Só os homens podem aconselhar?
  - b. As mulheres podem aconselhar outras mulheres? Qualquer um pode?

## C. Os Programas Da Igreja Para Mulheres

1. Qual é o programa que mais lhe interessa, como mulher?
2. Conhece algum programa que tenha sido implantado para mulher?
3. Conhece algum programa que tenha sido implantado por mulher?
4. É um programa de evangelização na sua igreja que tenha sido implantado para mulher?

## D. Disciplina

1. Quando, e por quais razões é disciplina necessário para as mulheres? Para os homens?
2. Que é esta disciplina?

## E. A Mudança

1. Se você pudesse mudar alguma coisa a respeito da mulher na igreja, o que mudaria?

## F. A Mulher Católica e a Mulher Protestante

1. O Que você acha que é a visão que a mulher católica tem das características de uma mulher ideal?
2. Que diferença há desta visão em relação a mulher pentecostal, na sua opinião?
3. Na sua opinião, quais são as características da brasileira ideal?
4. De acordo com os tipos de mulher nas igrejas protestante e católicas?
  - a. Que tipo de mulher você acha que o homem preferia que a mulher fosse--a católica ou a pentecostal? Porque?
  - b. Que qualidades são mais importante em cada estilo de vida das mulheres?
  - c. Que qualidade na mulher você acha mais atraente e porque?

## G. Liderança e Participação

1. Você é Membro da igreja que frequenta? Sim ou não, e porque?
2. Se você fosse membro, que influência teria no seu relacionamento com a sua igreja?
3. A sua igreja encoraja (ou permite) os membros participar nas políticas públicas? Porque ou não porque?

## H. A Mudança

1. Se você pudesse mudar alguma coisa a respeito da mulher na igreja, o que mudaria?

### III. VIDA DOMÉSTICA E A FAMÍLIA

- A. Vida Doméstica
  - 1. Qual é um dia típico para você?
  - 2. Como é a sua vida doméstica?
  - 3. Houve alguma mudança desde que se tornou crente?
  - 4. Você passa mais tempo em casa agora, ou não?
  - 5. Como você divide o seu tempo com a casa e as atividades de igreja?
- B. Mulher e Marido
  - 1. Como é o seu relacionamento espiritual com seu marido?
  - 2. Como as casais/você e seu marido tomam decisões?  
Quem faz as decisões e como as decisões estão feitas?
- C. Mãe e Filhos
  - 1. Como você aplica os ensinamentos espirituais a seus filhos?
  - 2. Como suas crianças são disciplinadas?
- D. As Senhoras Mais Velhas
  - 1. Há muitas casas de três gerações que perduram ainda no seu bairro ou na mesma igreja?
  - 2. Como são as senhoras mais velhas tratadas?
    - a. A estas senhoras são permitidas a liderança em no lar, ou na igreja?
    - b. A quem as senhoras podem ensinar?
- E. Os Positivos e os Negativos
  - 1. Qual é a maior característica de um lar pentecostal?
  - 2. O que você mudaria, se pudesse?

### IV. CONCLUSÃO E SUMÁRIO

- A. As Estatísticas
  - 1. Idade
  - 2. Duração da habitação no Recife
  - 3. Renda e Classe Econômica
  - 4. Estado do Casamento
  - 5. Duração do associada com a Igreja (membro? congregada?)
- B. Sumário
  - 1. Quando você morrer, como você gostaria que as pessoas se lembrassem de você? (Que legado gostaria de deixar para as pessoas que lembrassem de você? amor, fé, obediência, serviço?)
  - 2. O que seria mais importante para as mulheres estrangeiras conhecerem sobre a vida das mulheres pentecostais aqui?  
(O que você gostaria de dizer para as mulheres norte-americanas sobre a vida no Brasil?)

### V. ORAÇÃO

## APPENDIX B:

ATTEMPTED SOCIAL CONTROL OF PENTECOSTALS BY  
THE ROMAN CATHOLIC MAJORITY: EXAMPLES FROM THE NORTHEAST, 1911-1946

<u>SOCIAL CONTROL MECHANISMS</u>	<u>NORTHEASTERN STATES</u>				
<u>A. IGNORING PENTECOSTALS</u> (Denial of normal rights and privileges of Brazilian citizens)	<u>Se Al Pe Par RGN Ce Pj Ma Pa</u>				
1. Forbidden to sing hymns in own home	1				
2. Forbidden to greet others with Pentecostal greeting 'A paz do Senhor' (The peace of the Lord)	1				
3. Forbidden burial in public graveyard		1	1		1
4. Forbidden to transact any business with members of the community					1
5. Access to public wells or water sources denied				1	1
6. Access to public sources of food (eg. buying in markets) denied				1	1
<u>B. RIDICULING PENTECOSTALS</u> (Shaming them before the community)	<u>Se Al Pe Par RGN Ce Pj Ma Pa</u>				
1. Hate literature published and distributed		1			1
2. Bible burnings				1	1 1
3. Women forced to scrub floor of Roman Catholic church	1				
4. Preacher pelted with chicken heads					1
5. Priests denounce Pentecostalism as evil and Satanic		1			1
6. Priests threaten to excommunicate converts to Pentecostalism					1

C. OSTRACIZING PENTECOSTALS

(Perpetrating violent acts,  
separating them from the  
community-at-large)

Se Al Pe Par RGN Ce PI Ma Pa

1. Mob violence against Pentecostals	1	3	1	1			
2. Houses of Pentecostals destroyed by arson				1			
3. Threats of physical violence; psychological threats		2	1	1			
4. Bible burnings		1	1	1			
5. Preacher pelted with chicken heads				1			
6. Beatings of colporteurs, preachers, or converts	1		1	2			
7. Stoning of colporteurs, preachers, or converts		1	2	2			
8. Pentecostal churches robbed and ransacked			1	1			
9. Use of guns by Catholic mobs; People killed		1	2	1	1		

D. FORMAL ACTION AGAINST OPPOSING

PENTECOSTALISM  
(Obtaining legal injunctions  
to stop the threat of social  
destabilization)

Se Al Pe Par RGN Ce PI Ma Pa

1. Priests threaten to excommunicate converts				1			
2. Municipal legislation enacted to forbid hymn-singing and public greetings	2						
3. Pentecostalism becomes a punishable offence; converts serve jail sentences				2			

Abbreviation of State Names:

Se = Sergipe                      Par = Paraíba  
Al = Alagoas                    RGN = Rio Grande do Norte  
Pe = Pernambuco                Ce = Ceará

PI = Piauí  
Ma = Maranhão  
Pa = Pará

## APPENDIX C:

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF PENTECOSTALISM IN THE STATES OF BRAZIL,  
IN FIVE YEAR SPANS (1911-1935)

Dates	State	Year first church established	No. of states reached in 5 year period
1911-15	Pará	1911	6
	São Paulo	1911	
	Paraná (a)	1911	
	Ceará	1914	
	Piauí	1914	
	Alagoas	1915	
1916-20	Pernambuco	1916	5
	Amazonas	1917	
	Amapá	1917	
	Rio Grande do Norte	1918	
	Paraíba	1918	
1921-25	Maranhão	1921	7
	Mato Grosso	1922	
	Rondonia	1922	
	Rio de Janeiro	1923	
	Santa Catarina	1923	
	Espírito Santo	1924	
	Rio Grande do Sul	1924	
1926-30	Bahia	1926	3
	Sergipe	1927	
	Minas Gerais	1927	
1931-35	Acre	1932	1

Sources: Developed from Abraão de Almeida, *História das Assembleias de Deus no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro, 1982); and Wilson Endruvelt, 'Pentecostalism in Brazil' (Northwestern University, 1975).

Note: a) The beginning of Pentecostalism in the south came from the work of Luis Francescon and the *Congregação Cristã*. Though not in any way linked to the *Assembleia de Deus*, his programmes in São Paulo and Paraná were initiated almost simultaneously with Berg and Vingren's efforts in Pará.



APPENDIX D:  
PRINCIPAL PROTESTANT DENOMINATIONS IN BRAZIL (1982)

Denomination (by rank)	Date of Founding	Adults (15 yrs.+)	Affiliated	Number of Congregations
Assembléias de Deus	1910	2,783,000	4,000,000	10,576
Congregação Crista	1910	600,000	1,000,000	3,500
Convenção Batista Brasileira(a)	1881	350,294	1,050,000	5,389
O Brasil Para Cristo	1955	250,000	1,000,000	4,000
Adventista do Sétimo Dia	1894	173,837	300,000	603
Evangélica da Confissão Luterana(b)	1823	136,917	628,690	1,599
Presbiteriana Independente	1903	130,000	180,000	650
Presbiteriana	1859	124,799	623,995	2,819
Evangélica Luterana	1890	100,000	186,200	1,112
Cruzada Nacional de Evangelização	1946	72,567	200,000	550
Igreja Metodista	1835	62,550	93,600	1,567

Source: Developed from David Barrett, 'Brazil' in The  
World Christian Encyclopedia (Nairobi, 1982), pp.  
186-195.

Notes:

- a) Brazilian Baptist Convention. Has strong ties to the  
Southern Baptist Convention of the United States.  
b) German Lutherans, mostly resident in southern Brazil.

## APPENDIX E:

FIRST PENTECOSTAL CONVERSIONS AND HOLY SPIRIT BAPTISMS:  
SELECTED NORTHEASTERN STATES, 1917-35

Year	City/State	Name	First Convert	First Holy Spirit Baptism
1917	Recife PERNAMBUCO	Luli Ramos	X	X
1918	Vertente PARAÍBA	Maria Bronzeado	X	X
		Florencia Guimarães de Aquino	X	X
1919	Ceará-Mirim RIO GRANDE DO NORTE	Julia Matias de Araújo	X	
		Cecilia Leao	X	
		Maria Divina de Araújo	X	
1921	Sao Luis MARANHÃO	Ana Athan Lobato	X	
1921	Sao Luis MARANHÃO	Maria Oliveira		X
		Isabel Florental Rodrigues		X
1930	Salvador BAHIA	'Irma Honorina'		X
1935	Aracajú SERGIPE	Sancha Nascimento dos Santos		X

## APPENDIX F:

ASSEMBLEIA DE DEUS MEMBERSHIP INCREASES IN PERNAMBUCO  
(1916-1986)

Dates	No. of Years	Total Member- ship	Net Numerical Increase	Net Percentage Increase	Average Percentage Annual Increase
1916-28	13	1,500	1,500	--	115.38
1929-42	14	3,500	2,000	133.33	9.52
1943-68	26	45,321	41,821	1194.88	45.95
1969-86	18	120,000	74,679	164.77	9.15

Source: Assembleias de Deus, National Office Statistical Reports (Rio de Janeiro, 1986).

## APPENDIX G:

ASSEMBLEIA DE DEUS MEMBERSHIP INCREASES IN RECIFE  
(1916-1986)

Dates	No. of Years	Total Member- ship	Net Numerical Increase	Net Percentage Increase	Average Percentage Annual Increase
1916-30	15	100	100	--	6.66
1931-45	15	1,108	1,008	1008.00	67.20
1946-60	15	10,086	8,978	810.28	54.01
1961-75	15	34,706	24,620	244.10	16.27
1976-86	11	48,000	13,294	38.30	3.48

Source: Assembleias de Deus, National Office Statistical Reports (Rio de Janeiro, 1986).

## GLOSSARY

BACKSLIDDEN- A state of religious apostasy in the Pentecostal church. A 'backslidden' individual is someone who, having once been a member or congregado of the church, has willfully chosen to turn his back on the beliefs and/or behavioural standards of the church.

BACKSLIDER- One who has apostacized from the Pentecostal faith.

BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT- The Pentecostal-designated term to describe the experience of glossalalia, or 'speaking in tongues'. This term is taken from Biblical passages in The New Testament book 'The Acts of the Apostles'.

BASISMO- a movement within radical Catholicism, whose goals are to reform the Church from within, and to foster a thorough social, ecclesiastical and political transformation of Brazilian society through the efforts of grassroots organizations.

BENDITO- Literally 'blessed'. A religious song sometimes published in cordel form.

CANGACEIRO- A northeastern outlaw-bandit. The word derives from canga meaning 'yoke', a reference to the manner in which the bandits slung their weapons across their backs. The most famous cangaceiros, still recalled in popular song and literature, are the 'honourable' outlaw Antonio Silvino and the 'dishonourable' Virgolino Ferreira (Lampião).

CHAMADA- Literally, 'call'. The Pentecostal practise of issuing a verbal invitation for salvation to individuals in the congregation, after a sermon has been preached and the meeting has nearly come to a close. Also known as an 'altar call'.

CHURCH- To speak of the Church Universal and of denominations, the word Church (capitalized) has been used; church (uncapitalized) refers to a local congregation. When the word is used in a general sense of Brazil it refers to the Evangelical Churches; the Roman Catholic Church is referred to by name.

COMPADRESCO- A system of ritual kinship, based on close bonds between family members and their willingness to render mutual aid and support. Compadresco is best seen in the padrinho (godfather) and madrinha (godmother) relationships within the extended family. The godparents of a child assume responsibility of watching over his spiritual and material well-being. This in turn, tightens the link between parent and godparent, and encourages an attitude of loyalty and devotion to family members that exceeds all other ties (ie. 'Blood is thicker than water').

CONCIENTIZAÇÃO- This term, untranslatable in precise terms, roughly means 'to make people conscious' or 'making people aware politically

and socially'. In the Northeast, the term is linked to the 1960s social programmes inaugurated through the work of Eugenio Sales, the bishop of Natal, and Recife University professor Paulo Freire's work in literacy and Adult Basic Education. The natural outcome of conscientização, as its proponents saw it, was the social integration of marginalized groups, and ultimately, nothing less than a revolutionary transformation of society, starting from the grassroots level.

CONGREGADO- Individual who is an adherent of a particular church community. He attends services, but does not necessarily give any financial support to the congregation, and is not a church member. A congregado is not subject to the full force of church discipline which a fully-fledged member is pledged to accept.

ORIENTE- Literally, 'believer'. The Pentecostal self-designation. Since the name 'Christian' is applied indiscriminately to Protestant or Catholic, Pentecostals wish to be known as a people distinct from the religious status quo, as people who are closer to the pristine Christianity of the New Testament.

CRUZEIRO- Brazilian monetary unit.

DELEGADO- Police commissioner; head of local police.

EVANGELICAL- That arm of the Protestant Church which holds to the literal interpretation of Scripture, the necessity of a personal 'born again' experience as a prerequisite to spiritual salvation, and the imperative of personal evangelism as the duty of a true believer. Pentecostal churches are strongly evangelical.

EX VOTO- Payment to the saints or God for favours received, most often in the form of representations in wood or plaster of a part of the body which was restored after illness.

FAZENDA- Large landholding; a ranch.

FEIRA- Market, usually a weekly produce fair. The Portuguese names for the days of the week reflect the historical importance of the fair as an institution: 'segunda-feira' ('second-fair'/Monday), 'terça-feira' ('third-fair'/Tuesday), 'quarta-feira' ('fourth-fair'/Wednesday), 'quinta-feira' ('fifth-fair'/Thursday), and 'sexta-feira' ('sixth-fair'/Friday).

FILHA (FILHO) DE SANTO- Literally 'daughter (son) of the saint'. A medium in an Umbanda cult.

IGREJA-MATRIZ- 'Mother church'. Normally, the mother church of a large city, or sometimes an entire state. It is not uncommon for such an assembly to have dozens of churches under their administrative and financial control.

LATIFUNDIA- Large Landholdings in the Northeast, usually owned by one individual or a small family. Often, the land is relatively economically unproductive, i.e. being given over to grazing animals instead of being used in high-yield agriculture.

MÃE (PAI) DE SANTO- Literally 'mother (father) of the saint'. Leader of an Umbanda congregation, whose meeting hall is called a terreiro.

MUNDANISMO- Literally, 'worldliness'. Pentecostal designation for loose morality, flirting with the values of secular society.

NORDESTINO- An individual from the Northeast, an area including the states of Maranhão, Piauí, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Pernambuco, Alagoas, Sergipe, and Bahia. The region, known for its poverty, contains approximately a third of the population of Brazil. Recife is the area's largest city.

PELEIA- Literally 'battle' or 'quarrel', a peleia is a poetic contest (sometimes also called a desafio) where two poet-singers challenge each other to a test of wits. The winner is the one who demonstrates greater verbal agility and/or knowledge.

PRETO- Black, black person.

RELÍQUIA- An altar ornament in Catholic churches which may contain a strand of hair, a bone fragment, or a religious object belonging to a dead saint.

REPENTISTA- Sometimes also known as a cantador ('singer'), a repentista is a poet who composes verses spontaneously in an open-air contest with another poet, before a live street audience. The noun repente means 'burst' or 'gush', referring to the fact that in the verbal duels between rival poets (see peleias), the poet must be able to think both quickly and creatively.

SERTANEJO- A backlander, a native of the sertão.

SERTÃO- The hinterlands or backlands of the country, usually describing the drought-prone interior regions of the Northeast. An area larger than France and Germany put together, the sertão holds for Brazilians a certain mystique, and symbolizes difficulty, infinitude, and timelessness.

SINDICATO- Labour Union

SINA- 'Destiny' or 'fate'. From the verb assinar meaning 'to mark out', sina is a common northeastern term used to describe one's 'lot' in life. Sina implies the impossibility of changing a future which has already been predestined by some higher force.

TELENOVELA- Daily television serial; Soap Opera.

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June 13, 1985.
- 'Irma Alta'  
(Campo Grande)  
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July 2, 25, 1985.

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(Maid)  
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Gomes, Amaro  
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Monteiro, Nelson  
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 February 15, 1990.

Kristjansson, Carolyn  
(Daughter of MEPB missionaries; spent formative years in Recife)  
January 1984; March 1984.

Matson, Amy  
(Retired STPN instructor and administrator; Women's leader in  
MEPB; 20 years in Northeast) September 18, 28; October 4;  
November 22, 1989; February 15, 1990.

Matson, Harold  
(Former President of STPN; Assembléia de Deus and MEPB pioneer  
evangelist and church planter in Manaus and Recife; 40 years in  
Northeast.)  
September 18, 28; October 4; November 22, 1989; February 15,  
1990.

Mercer, Linda  
(Professor, STPN; 12 years in Northeast; Espinheiro, Recife)  
June 10, 12, 1985.

Mercer, William  
(Former STPN President; Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada Field  
Director for Brazil; 12 years in Northeast; Espinheiro, Recife)  
June 10, 12, 1985.

Plampin, Carolyn Goodman  
(Academic Dean, SREC)  
July 9, 16, 23, 30, 1985.

Swicegood, Audrey  
(Northeast Regional director and representative to the Executive  
Council of the National União Feminina Misionária do Brasil, the  
Convenção Batista Brasileira; 20 years in Northeast)  
July 8, 12, 1985.

#### Other Interviews

Biasi, Elenice  
(Coventry, United Kingdom)  
August 13, 1991

Burns, Bradford E.  
(Department of History, University of California at Los Angeles)  
December 17, 1982.

Grön, Sven Eric  
(Missions Secretary, Philadelphia Pentecostal Church, Stockholm,  
Sweden)  
May 10, 1990.

- Hoffnagel, Judith  
(Department of History, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco; Boa Viagem, Recife)  
August 2, 8, 1985.
- Hoffnagel, Marc  
(Department of History, Universidade Federal de Pernambuco; Boa Viagem, Recife)  
August 8, 1985.
- Östby, Josef  
(Director, 'Bibeln Till Alla'; Vällingby, Sweden)  
May 1, 1989; April 18, 1990.
- Pierson, Paul  
(Academic Dean, Fuller Theological Seminary School of World Mission, Pasadena California; Former missionary with the Presbyterian Church of America, in Recife, Pernambuco and Mato Grosso)  
December 15, 18, 1982.

## 2. PARTICIPANT-OBSERVATION STUDIES

### Attendance at Church Services

- Assembleia de Deus, Abreu e Lima, Pernambuco.
- Assembleia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá (Recife).  
(Igreja matriz, Recife Assembleia de Deus)  
June 9; July 10, 25; August 1, 1985.
- Assembleia de Deus, Santo Amaro (Recife).  
June 30, 1985.
- Igreja Batista, Capungua (Recife).  
July 5, 1985.
- Igreja Batista Emanuel, Boa Viagem (Recife).  
Rua Maria Carolina  
June 16, 30, 1985.
- Igreja da Fé, Afogados (Recife).  
June 15, 1985.
- Missão Evangelica Pentecostal, Campo Grande (Recife).  
Rua Prof. Francisco da Trindade 190  
June 23, 27; July 4, 7, 14, 21, 28; August 4, 1985.

Missão Evangélica Pentecostal, Casa Amarela (Recife).

(Igreja-mãe, Recife MEPB)

Avenida Norte 6371

June 2, 9, 23; July 7, 14, 21, 28; August 4, 11, 1985.

Missão Evangélica Pentecostal, Pelinhos (Olinda).

Avenida Antonio da Costa 81

July 28; August 3, 1985.

Missão Evangélica Pentecostal, Natal, Rio Grande do Norte.

Rua Itaporanga, no. 9

August 10, 1985.

Attendance at Church-linked Institutions, Conferences, and Special Events

Associação dos Homens de Negócio do Evangelho Pleno (ADHONEP)

(The Brazilian branch of 'The Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International')

Boa Viagem (Recife).

June 1, 1985.

Círculo de Oração

Missão Evangélica, Campo Grande; Missão Evangélica, Casa Amarela;

Assembleia da Deus, Cruz Cabugá.

June 27; July 4; August 1, 1985.

4 Confraternização de Natividade da Assembleia de Deus em Pernambuco

Assembleia de Deus, Cruz Cabugá

July 10-14, 1985

Seminário de Educadoras Cristãs

Rua Padre Inglês 143

May 27; July 16, 1985.

Seminário Teológico Pentecostal do Nordeste

Rua Marechal Deodoro 112 Encruzilhada

May 27, June 26, 31; July 31; August 5, 1985.

Sessão da Comissão Executiva do Supremo Concílio da Missão Evangélica Pentecostal do Brasil

Natal, Rio Grande do Norte.

August 10, 1985.

União Feminina Misionária Batista do Brasil, Convenção Batista

Brasileira

Rua do Hospício 187, Recife

July 9, 23, 26; August 1, 6, 1985.



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